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59th year of publication

Fewer babies worldwide:

long-range population projections keep falling

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It's a smaller world after all, exclaimed a recent headline on the editorial page of the *New York Times*. The world, it seems, is shrinking, at least in terms of population. Many of us can still remember reading the ominous warnings of Paul Ehrlich in his book *The Population Bomb*, which predicted that booming population growth would eventually kill the planet.

Demographers have typically worked on the assumption that the "total fertility rate" – the number of children born per woman – would eventually average out to 2.1. At that rate the population stabilizes over time: a couple has two children, the parents eventually die, and their children "replace" them. The 0.1 accounts for children who die before reaching the age of reproduction.

In the United Nations' most recent population report, however, the fertility rate is assumed to be 1.85, not 2.1. This will lead, later in this century, to global population decline. In a world brought up on the idea of a "population explosion," this is a startling notion. It will take some time for the world's population to actually start shrinking, but the next crisis is depopulation. The crisis is closer in Europe than elsewhere.

Projections to the year 2300

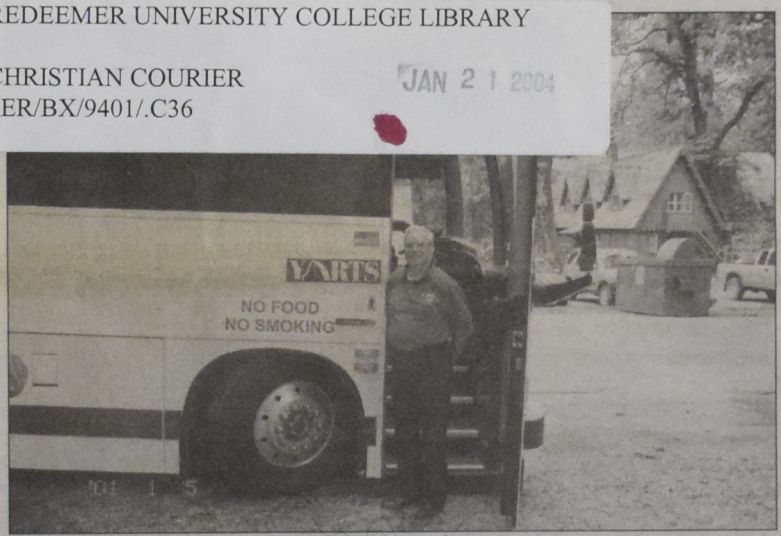
The Population Division of the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs recently published a long-range projection of world population in the year 2300. The study gives a range of scenarios based on projected fertility levels. Under the medium variant, considered the most probable, world population will rise from the current 6.3 billion to around 9 billion by 2300. This projection assumes that fertility levels will eventually stabilize around 2.0 children per woman.

The low scenario of world population in 2300 assumes fertility of 1.85 children per woman, while the high scenario assumes fertility of 2.35 children per woman. This would lead to world population levels of 2.3 billion and 36.4 billion, respectively.

The Population Division was careful to point out that the projections are very tentative, given that even slight variations in the fertility levels could result in major changes in population levels. If fertility turns out to be just 2% lower than that of the medium-fertility scenario, for example, population size would stabilize around 8.3 billion.

The report continues the trend in recent years of a steady lowering of the U.N. population projections. The 9 billion level in the new long-range forecasts show a notably smaller future population size than previous long-range projections, calculated at 10-12 billion. According to the Population Division this is primarily due to the recent fertility declines occurring throughout the developing world. It expects this trend will continue.

Almost all the expected population increase between 2000 and 2300 will take place in the less developed regions. Their population is projected to rise from 4.9 billion in 2000 to 7.7 billion in 2300. In the developed regions, population will see only a slight change, from 1.2 billion in 2000 to 1.3 billion in 2300.



As the population ages, more seniors will be working.

Shifts and aging

The medium-level projection also reveals major changes in the distribution of world population. Africa's share would nearly double, from 13% of the world population in 2003 to 24% in 2300. But Europe's share would be almost halved, from 12% to 7%. Asia's share could fall from its 61% level in 2000 to 55% in 2300.

In terms of individual countries, China, India and the United States will still be the most populous in the world. By 2050, India is expected to surpass China in population size and will remain the most populous country thereafter. Yet, the Big Three are expected to account for a declining share of the world population, passing from 43% in 2000 to about 35% in 2300.

Projections also forecast a dramatically older population. The world median age is expected to rise from 26 years today to nearly 50 years in 2300. Overall, the number of people aged 60 years or over would rise from the current 10% of world population, to 38% in 2300.

In developed regions, the share of those 60-or-over could more than double, from 19% in 2000 to 41% in 2300. In the developing countries the figure could more than quadruple, from 8% in 2000 to 37% in 2300.

The most notable change is for the group of people aged 80 or over, who will see their presence rise from just 1% today to 17%. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the share of those under age 15 will fall from 30% in 2000 to 16% by 2300.

This significant aging of world population would mean a large increase in the ratio of dependents (those under age 15 or over 59) to the population of working age (those aged 15 to 59). In the medium scenario, the world's dependency ratio rises from 0.7 in 2000 to 1.1 in 2300. This means there will be more than one dependent per person of working age.

Older first-time moms

New data confirm the U.N. projections. The average age at which women in the **United States** are having their first child has reached 25.1 years, the Associated Press reported. A study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attributes this trend to a drop in teen births and an increase in the number of women who are putting off motherhood until their 30s and 40s. The average age for a first-time mom in 1970 was 21.4.

In **Italy**, the average age of a mother's first child is also on the increase, according to the national statistics body, ISTAT. In 2000 the age reached 30.4, compared with 27.5 in 1980, the newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* reported. The overall fertility level for women rose marginally, to 1.26 children per woman in 2002, compared with 1.25 the year before. But the increase still leaves fertility well below the level needed – 2.2 children – to avoid a decline in population levels.

In the **United Kingdom**, a recent report affirmed that the population will start to fall after 2040. Another forecast, made by Office of National Statistics, puts at about 22% the level of women

See population projections p. 3...

News

Fertility rates, retirement and pensions

For those looking forward to early retirement, the latest statistics don't look good. On the other hand, if you were worried about being shelved before you are ready to quit, take heart. Your labor skills may be needed well after age 65.

In the more developed countries, fertility rates have fallen from low to unsustainable. Every developed nation is now below replacement level. In the early 1960's, Europe's fertility rate was 2.6. Today the rate is 1.4, and has been sinking for half a century. In Japan the rate is 1.3.

A *New York Times* article by Ben J. Wattenberg points out that among the more developed countries, the United States is an exception, with the highest fertility rate – just under 2.1. Moreover, the United States takes in more immigrants than the rest of the world combined. In the next 50 years America will grow by 100 million people, while Europe will lose more than 100 million.

Canada has been on an aging curve since 1996, according to the most recent statistics. The median age of the work force has been climbing rapidly, jumping 3.2 years over the last decade. Canada and Japan have the lowest ratios of younger individuals of working age (20 to 39 years) to older eligible workers (aged 40 to 59) among G-8 countries. Soon, the government fears, the number of those retiring will equal or surpass the number entering the work force, and a labor shortage will result. The solution? Increased immigration.

The imbalance will have other effects as well: a booming elderly population that needs pensions and health-care services and a shrinking pool of younger workers to pay for them.

The century of aging

Demographers gathered at a meeting of the International Statistical Institute in Berlin this past summer warned of more problems due to population aging. "While the 20th century was the century of population growth, we can already say from a demographic perspective that the 21st century will go into the history books as the century of aging," said Wolfgang Lutz of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria.

The United Nations predicts the percentage of the global population aged 65 or over will soar to 16% by 2050 from the current 7%. In some countries, more than a third of the population will be 65 or older by then.

The latest demographic data from Eurostat, the official statistics body for the European Union, reported that the total fertility rate in the European Union last year remained virtually unchanged at 1.47 children per woman, compared with 2001 and 2000. Guaranteeing a stable population requires around 2.2 children per woman. Coming in under-average are countries such as Germany, at 1.40; Greece and Spain, at 1.25 each; and Italy, at 1.26.

According to Eurostat the share of the population above age 65 in the current 15 members of the EU will grow from around 16% in 2000 to about 21% in 2020, perhaps climbing to 28% in 2050. From around 2010 onward, the share of the population of working age is expected to decline from around two-thirds to about 58% of the total population in Europe by 2050.

Paying for pensions

This has put pressure on European governments to cut pensions to a sustainable level. Opposition to reducing pension entitlements, however, caused a nationwide strike in France this past summer, and demonstrations involving more than a million people in Austria. So far, leaders in Austria, Germany and Spain have only been able to avoid strikes by means of cosmetic reforms, *The Economist* magazine noted.

The leaders may not be able to avoid conflict for much longer, the magazine speculated. In Germany an advisory panel recommended last August that pension payments be cut by as much as 10% in real terms over the coming years, and that the retirement age be raised to 67 from 65.

The flaw in European state pension systems is that they are financed on a pay-as-you-go basis: taxes on the (shrinking) workforce finance the pensions of retirees. But an aging population, combined with longer life expectancy and fewer children, means the old system no longer works. According to a Eurostat report dated May 20, 2000, overall expenditure on pensions in the current 15 EU members was 12.5% of gross domestic product.

Some governments — Britain, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Switzerland — have shifted much of the pension burden onto employers. Yet this move only shifts the responsibility without resolving the underlying problem.

Many companies in the United States, where employer-financed pensions are more common, are running into financial difficulties because of pension burdens. According to Newsweek, companies now face a $350 billion deficit in pension plans. Financing these pensions could well damage the country's economic recovery as resources flow into pensions rather than into new business investment.

Less stress on environment

The questions facing government policy-makers in the face of a rapidly aging population range from how to funnel money for infrastructure – for example, should we build fewer schools and more hospitals? – to how to improve training and education in order to meet the needs of an aging society. To reduce stress on Canada's pension plan many experts are recommending that the retirement age be raised. People are not only living longer, they are also healthier and stronger, and therefore able to stay in the work force longer.

When populations shrink, the economic dislocations can be severe. Will there be far less demand for housing and office space? Paradoxically, labor shortages can also push wages higher. Of course, such shortages in countries with low fertility rates could be alleviated by immigration from countries with higher fertility rates — a migration from poor countries to rich ones. Europeans, however, have been actively trying to reduce immigration, fearing an influx from Muslim and other countries will radically alter their culture.

Prospects for the environment, however, look better. Past research on global warming was based on a long-term United Nations projection, issued in the early 1990's, of 11.6 billion people in 2200, far more people than we're ever likely to see. The new projections show the global population rising from just over six billion now to just under nine billion in 2050, followed by a decline.

Fewer people will likely mean lower consumption (e.g. of oil) and less pollution. Clean water and clean air should be more plentiful. Wealthy countries also tend to be better at cleaning up their pollution than poor nations. Some of the gains may be offset, however, by the fact that as the population ages more people live alone and thus take up more space.

Wattenberg surmises that the geopolitical implications of the changes in population may well be the most important. Although there isn't a one-to-one relationship between population and power, numbers matter. China and India each have populations of more than a billion; their power and influence will almost surely increase in the decades to come, while Europe will shrink and age, absolutely and relatively.

Those countries that rely on immigration to sustain their numbers will see even greater changes to the makeup of their populations and increased diversity in their culture.

Should the world face a "clash of civilizations," Wattenberg suggests, America may find itself with weaker allies. It may then be forced to play a greater role in defending and promoting the liberal, pluralist beliefs and values of Western civilization.

Highlights of 2001 census data from Statistics Canada:

- Canada's median age is at an all-time high of 37.6 years, an increase of 2.3 years from the 1996 census. Median age is defined as the point where exactly one half of the population is older than the median age and the other half is younger.
- There are more senior Canadians (those aged 65 and older) than ever before, representing 13 per cent of the population. The number of Canadians aged 80 or over increased by a whopping 41 per cent over the last decade, to 932,000.
- There has been a sharp decline in the number of children aged four and under – 1.7 million, down 11 per cent from a decade ago.
- There are fewer young people entering the working-age population to replace individuals in the age group nearing retirement. For every person aged 55 to 64, there were 1.4 individuals in the age group 15 to 24. Statistics Canada projects the number will be equal in another decade – a development that could have serious social, economic and policy impacts.
- Among G-8 nations, Canada has a higher median age than the United States and Russia, lower than Germany, Japan and Italy and about the same as France and Britain.

Politics

Population projections

...continued from page 1

Seniors may have less leisure time in the future

choosing not to have children. According to the report, the average British woman married at 23 at the start of the 1980s, compared with just over 28 today.

Japan is also concerned about the lack of little ones. Its fertility rate is around 1.3 children per woman. But efforts by government authorities to stimulate births have failed. Since the late 1990s, Japanese prefectures have organized hiking trips and cruises for singles in the hope of encouraging weddings. The results have been poor. One scheme in Shimane prefecture in western Japan cost $150,000 over three years, but only produced seven marriages and four babies.

Countries with historically high numbers of children are also facing notable declines in fertility. In **Ireland** the average number of children per family is down from 2.2 in 1986 to 1.6 in 2002, according to census figures reported June 20 in the *Irish Independent*. Cohabiting couples accounted for 8.4% of all family units last year, more than double the rate of six years earlier. And almost two-thirds of these couples were childless.

In **Mexico**, the national body in charge of demographic matters, Conapo, has warned of coming problems due to the aging of the country's population. The sector of those aged 65 or over is now only 5% of the population; that figure could rise to 25% by 2050, the newspaper *El Heraldo de México* reported May 25.

The quintupling of this group represents a radical break with the past. In 1930 the 65-plus age group counted for 3% of the population. It took another four decades to reach 4.3%. From 1970 to now it only rose by 0.7%. The major increase in the elderly population expected in coming decades is due to a combination of an increase in life expectancy and a sharp decrease in fertility. A population boom is indeed on the way, among the elderly.

The courts and the constitution

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

The vast majority of the world's states have written constitutions specifying the arrangement of government institutions, the relationship between the levels of government in a federal system, the rights of citizens, and the amending procedures. Unlike ordinary legislation, which requires only a simple majority in a parliamentary assembly, a constitution is usually protected by the requirement of a qualified or raised majority.

For example, a proposed amendment to the US Constitution must secure the approval of a two-thirds majority of both houses of Congress and three-quarters of the state legislatures. Here in Canada an amendment to our Constitution Acts generally requires the agreement of both chambers of Parliament and seven provinces containing at least 50 percent of the country's population. But some issues, for example the status of the monarchy, require provincial unanimity. Not surprisingly, the US Constitution has been amended only a handful of times, while Canada's two post-patriation attempts at amendment have failed.

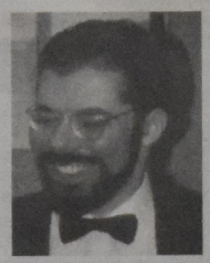
Why should it be so difficult to amend a constitution? Why not allow an ordinary parliamentary majority? Because a constitution is assumed to represent a broad consensus among the citizenry in favor of a particular form of government and the political values that support it. To change a constitution thus requires a similar consensus in its favor. If such a consensus is not forthcoming, then the constitution remains as is.

This very consensual nature of a constitution indicates why the role of the courts in its interpretation is potentially troublesome. Since 1803 the United States Supreme Court has claimed the authority to rule on the constitutionality of federal and state legislation. In 1982 our own Supreme Court acquired similar powers under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is in itself nothing wrong in this, as long as the courts understand their own role as functioning within this consensus.

However, in recent decades the courts have effectively changed their countries' constitutions in ways that have departed from the consensus. Perhaps the most infamous example of this was the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973. Here the US Supreme Court invalidated the carefully constructed abortion laws of the several states on the basis of a supposed right of privacy nowhere found in the text of the Constitution itself and for which there was no consensus in the public at large. This single decision, so controversial at the time, unleashed three decades of political discord yet to be settled in a satisfactory manner.

Although the Supreme Court of Canada's 1988 abortion decision, *Morgenthaler v. the Queen*, took care to leave room for parliamentary action, later decisions have increasingly followed the American pattern. Last June's Ontario Appeals Court ruling on same-sex marriage, as well as the US decision invalidating Texas' anti-sodomy law, can hardly be said to reflect an obvious popular consensus in the two countries. Had formal amendments been proposed to legalize same-sex marriage or to prohibit anti-sodomy laws, it is highly unlikely they would have overcome the qualified majority requirements.

The courts are thus undertaking, on highly questionable legal and constitutional grounds, to change their countries' constitutions in ways that depart significantly from the consensus of the citizens and that undercut the formal amendment process. While the latter requires a qualified majority, the courts are effectively amending the constitution by doing an end run around the consensus. The problem is not so much that the courts are usurping democracy, as some would have it, as that they lack a proper understanding of what a constitution is, namely, something rooted in the consensual traditions and mores of a political community.



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Editorial

Looking back at Christmas as a site of conflict

Harry der Nederlanden

As I write this, the Christmas break is just behind us. My mailbox – my electronic mailbox – is overflowing with stories about the suppression of Christian Christmas displays. They're all from the US, of course, the source of most Christian news services.

The stories relate numerous instances in which any indication of the origin and meaning of the holiday are taken as attacks on the rights of non-Christians. An aggressive and well-heeled segment of the American population, it seems, is determined to erase any reminder of the influence and presence of the Christian faith in that country.

Cities and towns that used to put up traditional Christmas displays featuring the wise men and the shepherds kneeling in the Bethlehem stall have for the most part long ago trashed them or stashed them in some dark basement. The American Civil Liberties Union has been largely successful in arguing that such displays are a violation of the separation between church and state. Not satisfied with this achievement, the secularizers have extended their campaign. One school even yielded to pressure to remove their Christmas tree. Apparently it was deemed a Christian symbol – which will surprise those evangelicals who have been insisting that it is a pagan symbol smuggled into the heart of Christmas celebrations.

At an American grade school even Santa was seized by the beard and ejected from the premises. He had the temerity to ask the children about the origin of Christmas, which elicited the unspeakable reply from some politically incorrect kid that it had something to do with the birth of Jesus.

According to one news story, educators have been so sensitized about offending the sensibilities (rights?) of people of other faiths that many teachers won't allow their students to display art work that includes expressions of Christian themes; in fact, some won't even tolerate their production. And the singing of traditional Christmas carols in public schools has gone the way of school prayer; in fact, in some cases even the words of secular Christmas songs were changed to delete the word Christmas. It does, after all, contain the offensive allusion to Christ. Instead of singing "We wish you a merry Christmas," I suppose the kids sang, "We wish you excessive spending and a low interest rate."

Strangely, this virulent attempt at cultural cleansing (the Pope called it "cultural vandalism" in Europe) is going on in the most overtly Christian country in the developed world. Although most Americans don't agree with this attempt to wipe from the public realm all allusions to the Christian roots of the nation and the beliefs of the majority of its people, it continues apace. How does this happen in a democratic country – that a minority can assert its will over that of the majority?

Part of the answer is given in David Koyzis' column in this issue. America (Canada, too) is not just committed to the rule of the majority; it is committed to the rule of law. The most basic of those laws are enshrined in a constitution (or bill of rights), and the US constitution contains a clause prohibiting the establishment of religion. Those who wrote this law had no intention of banning the Christian faith from the public realm. On the contrary, almost all the founding fathers believed that Christian principles are the foundation of liberty and good government as well as of morality. They did believe, however, that to designate a particular denomination (= religion) as the official one and to support it with public funds would be a big mistake. Nor did they want to impose any particular set of beliefs on anyone.

The clause did not prevent the development of a public school system which until quite recently inculcated students with a more or less Christian worldview and taught more or less Christian standards of behavior. It was not the voters who decided that this was contrary to the American constitution but lawyers and judges who (re)interpreted the meaning of the non-establishment clause. Behind this interpretation was undoubtedly a changing worldview, including changing ideas about the source and status of law.

Yet, we must not assume that those who opposed the virtual enshrinement of a Protestant civil religion in the public schools and other public institutions were all aggressive secularizers. Some were undoubtedly Jewish. Others perhaps Catholic. And still others Protestants sensitive to the tensions this caused in the lives of some children. They made a credible case that to make the public schools into purveyors of America's civil religion was in effect an establishment of religion and therefore contrary to the intent of the constitution.

Reformed Christians influenced by Kuyper have tended to agree with this view of public education – in part because they questioned its authentically Christian nature. Their (our) historical struggle to establish independent Christian schools have given them a somewhat different understanding about the proper place of religion in the public square than that held by most American evangelicals. They are, perhaps, less prone to assert Christian dominance.

Ironically, the course set by the US resembles that taken by the most secular nation in Europe – France. The French recently banned the wearing of headscarves in school by Islamic girls. To be consistent, they also banned Jewish skullcaps and "large" crosses. Commentators on this continent by and large agree that this is ludicrous. Yet, this action issues from the same impulse as the assault on the display of Christian symbols at Christmas.

In a recent column in the *New York Times*, Nicholas D. Kristof opens with a remark that is becoming more and more typical: "Religion may preach peace and tolerance, yet it's hard to think of anything that ... has been more linked to violence and malice around the world." Increasingly religion, seen as belief in ultimate truth, is being depicted, explicitly and implicitly, as the basic source of most (if not all) intolerance, suppression, oppression, hatred and violence in the world. This is, at least in part, why so many people see George Bush as dangerous. He's dangerous not in spite of his beliefs but because of them. He is a true believer, and true believers have always been prone to sacrifice others – by the thousands – in the name of Truth and Right.

Religious symbols are the most potent signs of difference and perhaps the most likely to arouse strong passions. They do, after all, concern the things we hold most dear, most vital to our lives. In the name of peace and dispassionate discourse, then, the public square – the place where we must hash out how all of us are to live in harmony – must stifle the symbols of difference. They are red flags that incite conflict.

In Canada we have not seen a whole lot of lawsuits about religious exercises and symbols in the public square. However, the Christmas display that was in front of our town hall last year was not there this year. Department store displays are resolutely secular as is the music played in stores. Radio stations, except for the classical ones, play almost exclusively secular Christmas songs. And the major television stations are all about Santa, Rudolph and Frosty, while Christmas films feature secular "miracles" of transformation. We are engaged in self-censorship.

It rightly outrages Christian sensibility to have our holy days turned into parodies. Christmas is overwhelmed by Consumer Santa, Easter by an egg-laying Bunny, and Thanksgiving by Turkey Day. Does the integrity of our Christian witness demand that we keep fighting to assert the original meaning of these holidays in an increasingly pluralistic society?

When we look at the other major religions, like Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, they have no compunctions about imposing their religious holidays in the countries where they are in the majority. They even repress the celebrations of other faiths. Why shouldn't Christians do the same?

Although we in North America speak of multiculturalism and pluralism, we do not provide days off on our calendar for the festivals of other faiths. Indeed, to accommodate them all would be impossible. The Reformed faith, however, is not the only one that makes claims on the totality of life, including the public realm. But in a diverse society each religion cannot order our shared space according to its worldview.

What sets the Christian faith apart is not this total claim over all of life, but the way in which it asserts this claim. Christians did not learn this all at once. But at the heart of the Christian approach to order and power, there is a moment of passivity, of waiting, of renunciation. It is directly related to the cross of our Lord.

We don't seek to impose utopia; neither do we impose a Christian order. We try not to usurp the place of our Lord and King. This is why liberty is so central to the Christian view of government. Liberty is a retraction, a limit placed on our own power. Liberty makes room not for me to express the totality of my beliefs but constrains me to make room for the other to express his.

As we witness in the public square, we are called to be bold witnesses, but that doesn't mean we are called to bully and dominate.

There he lies – our Lord and King – a baby in a barn among beasts. Strange, isn't it, that this image should intimidate anyone. What do they fear? Him or us?

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Letters

Time to focus on provincial and municipal governments

Will Paul Martin, the fiscal deficit slayer now tackle Canada's social deficit?

A popular question no doubt. However, the answer to Gerald Vandezande's question is not really in the hands of Paul Martin to the extent he and others appear to believe. Over the past 20 years or so, an inexorable shift has and continues to take shape in transferring the initiative for social policy development from the federal to provincial and to the municipal levels of government. While it may still be true that the federal government has the most significant power for taxation and revenue generation, the real decision to slay the social deficit lies at the other levels of government – provincial and municipal.

In fact, since the Mulroney government first attacked the Canada Assistance Plan in the late 1980's, and Paul Martin finally killed it in the mid-1990's the federal government has substantially abandoned national social policy development and in its place has danced to the tune of the provinces, delivering more or less funding depending on the volume of the tune. The Social Union Framework Agreement developed in the late 1990's provides the mechanism for provincial control over federal spending in areas of social policy. Regardless of what Martin does in terms of funding, the design and delivery of services is constitutionally guaranteed at the whim of provincial governments. At this point in time, lobbying the Federal government for anything other than a willingness to have provinces spend more of its money is a pointless exercise. If the social deficit is to follow the fiscal deficit, the time, money and energy now expended at the national level should be redirected to the level of provincial and municipal governments – the latter because they are created by provincial legislation, that's where the vast majority of social issues are located and it's consistent with an important social policy principle, namely that of subsidiarity.

A good example of this conundrum is the manner in which the Alberta government has treated families on welfare. In 1993, when Klein decided to slay the fiscal deficit, he cut welfare rates by 20%. When the federal government introduced the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) in the late 1990's, the Klein government reduced welfare rates by the amount of the NCBS. Between 1993 and 2003 the inflation rate reduced the purchasing power of welfare rates by about 20%. During the 10 year period between 1993 and 2003, the Klein government refused to increase welfare rates by even a penny, and when they finally did increase the benefit, it was by a meagre $20.00 a month for a family. At the same time, their new found generosity also allowed the NCBS to flow through in the amount of about $15.00 per month. During the same period, the federal government increased its funding to Alberta under the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). Not a penny of the regular federal increases went to increase payments to families on welfare. Oh, and by the way, while the federal government was increasing its CHST payments to Alberta, the Klein government introduced a 10% flat tax that took about $1.5 billion out of provincial revenues, providing the greatest benefit to the wealthy. Of course the Klein government has been leading the attack on the federal government for not spending enough money to support health care.

And oh yes, at about the same time, the Klein government also provided nearly $1.0 billion of "drought relief" to farmers, greenhouse operators, beekeepers and mushroom growers. Even the farmers in southern Alberta who irrigated all summer were eligible for "drought relief" and in September of that year the periodic crop reports generated by the government showed that the crop in that region was predicted at 150% of the average of the last 10 years or so. But, meanwhile, not a nickel for families on welfare, a third of whom are between jobs, another third of whom are working but not being paid enough and a final third of whom suffer from health, addiction and are otherwise unable or incapable of working. Overall, about 40% of all welfare clients are children. And, oops, I almost forgot, the Klein government has ended more years than I can remember with multi-billion dollar surpluses, except in years when there's an election. In those instances, it's found a magic reason to spend money, especially in a declining and increasingly irrelevant rural Alberta. Meanwhile, Alberta's major municipal regions experience increasing poverty, homelessness, begging, increasing income disparity, long waiting lists for health care, at $5.90 per hour, declining opportunities for public recreation, the lowest minimum wage in Canada, increasing hunger, a shortage of schools, teachers and doctors, a declining infrastructure and a general inability to cope with the demands of rapid growth..

For families who are poor, life in Alberta is a desperate experience. I know of mothers who report stealing food to feed their children, mothers who go fishing in the Bow River on a weekly basis so their children get some kind of meat. I know of children who take food from breakfast programs, so they will have a lunch, I know of children who are NEVER able to take part in a recreation activity and children with disabilities who do not get the services they need, simply because the Alberta government doesn't value these families.

So, while I agree with Gerald's objective, I think the target of his considerable ability and energy is wrong; indeed, it's my contention that to reduce the "social deficit" it's time to focus on provincial and municipal governments.

Jake Kuiken
Calgary, Alberta

Dumbfounded by repeal of Ontario tax credit

I will not soon forget the experience I had on Dec. 10th. As a parent of children in an independent Christian school, I went with anticipation to the parliament to hear and see whether or not Premier Mc Guinty had a smidgeon of compassion left for us. This being Taxpayer Day (Bill 2 is set to be the largest tax hike in Ontario's history) I was ready to hear that scrapping the Equity in Education Tax Credit (EETC) is one of the few election promises Mr McGuinty intends to keep. I could not believe that amidst cries of shame, shame, from both the Conservatives and NDP, the Liberals decided to give us an extra kick in the teeth and not only rescind the tax credit law but they intend to make it retroactive to Jan. 2003 (9 months before they were even elected). Unbelievable and unprecedented!

Dumbfounded I sat and listened to our attorney general, Hon. Mr Bryant, wax eloquently about how this was also International Human Rights Day and we all had to do our part to ensure equity and fairness in our society and that we have to see to it that all our children grow up and succeed in a climate of equal opportunity. Am I to conclude that my Christian school children are to be excluded because they are children or because they are Christian? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drafted by a Canadian, adopted by the United Nations, to be upheld by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Attorney General himself has today by his and this governments action of repealing the tax credit returned this province to a state of being in violation of the Human Rights Code. A wrong righted by the previous government has once again been wronged. Am I to conclude that our family is not entitled to the three constitutional rights of freedom of religion, conscience and security? Unbelievable and unprecedented!

I happened to meet Finance minister Sorbara on the steps of the legislature and I asked him where his children and grandchildren attended school. Private school was his reply. The premier himself and many other MPP's have chosen religious or private schools. Maybe these leaders should put their children and grandchildren where their mouth is on the issue of infusing hope and rebuilding the public system. Double standard maybe? Choice in education only available to certain faiths and the rich? Two tier perhaps?

We hope to continue to pay tuition to send our children and grandchildren to quality schools that meet their faith based educational needs because to us there is no other choice. In addition we will continue to pay our educational taxes to the public school because there is no other choice. Is the government by chance double dipping? It doesn't add up but is this what it means to be persecuted for your faith?

The Attorney General ended his Human Rights speech with the words, "We also seek to celebrate and leverage the diversity of our multicultural community. We welcome steps to address any conflicts or tensions that affect our citizens. It is surely the very crux of Canadian civility and equality that we all respect equal protection under the law." Unbelievable! They haven't even responded to my letters or returned my calls. What a day!

Yvonne Lunshof
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Reflections

Wagner's great-grandson talks about his father's friendship with Hitler

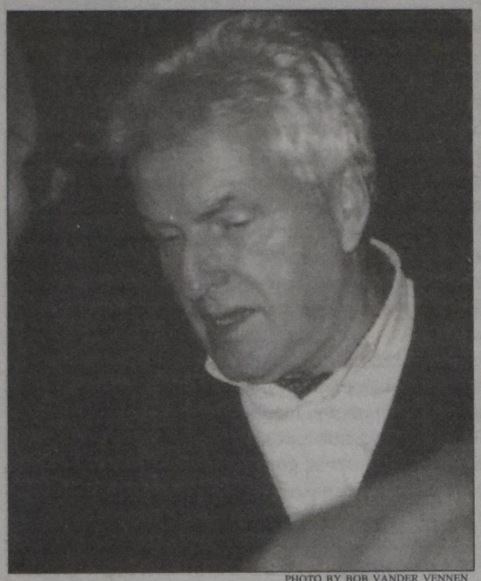


PHOTO BY BOB VANDER VENNEN

Gotfried Wagner discusses Hitler and his family

Bob VanderVennen

Toronto — Adolph Hitler was so stimulated by the passionate and anti-semitic operatic music of Richard Wagner that he became a close family friend of Wagner's son Siegfried and his family. They called Hitler "uncle wolf" at their many visits together. The chief god in Wagner's operas was Wotan, who was also called wolf.

Gottfried Wagner, great-grandson of Richard Wagner, recently spoke twice for the public on the Wagner-Hitler connection at a conference on music of the holocaust held at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music. Holding a doctor's degree in musicology, Gottfried said that once you know about Richard Wagner's effect on Hitler's outlook on life, "After Auschwitz, when you have the name Wagner, you have two choices, silence or activism." So now nearing sixty, he is speaking about a hundred times a year around the world to expose the intimate relation between Hitler and Wagner's music. He dedicates his life to promoting dialogue between Jews and German non-Jews.

Wagner's powerful operas are not merely fantasy, not fairy stories, insisted Gottfried Wagner. The music itself, even apart from the words, clearly expresses Wagner's worldview, his political and future-oriented ideas. All his music gave expression to Wagner's intellectual and philosophical views, contrary to what some interpreters of his music say.

Hitler tried to make German life like a Wagnerian opera, stated Gottfried. Hitler connected strongly with Wagner's political ideas. Hitler knew clearly what kinds of views of reality Wagnerian music expressed. The music was anti-Semitic, futuristic, and anti-feminist. Are you aware, Gottfried asked, that most of the women in Wagner's operas committed suicide? Hitler himself was suicidal and in the end killed himself and seemed willing to have Germany commit suicide rather than end the war when it became obvious Germany would lose the war.

So how are operatic producers to set up the performance of Wagner's operas like the *The Ring of the Nibelungen*, as the Canadian Opera Company plans to so in a few years, asks Gottfried. You cannot produce such operas without making clear to people the philosophy such operas express.

Gottfried Wagner did not learn about the holocaust, Hitler's role in it, and the close connection between Hitler and the Wagner family until he was nine years old. The family had no television and isolated itself in the Bavarian town of Bayreuth, which became the home of the annual Wagnerian opera festival. But at age nine he saw a documentary film away from home with shocking pictures of the atrocities that happened at Buchenwald. He had no idea until then that his family was close to Hitler and the Nazis.

Gottfried realized that it was dishonest for him to avoid the Nazi history. Those horrors need to be talked about. Germans need to come to terms with them. Yet examining that history is still controversial in Germany today, and there are contradictory views about Wagner's music. Naturally Gottfried is an outcast in the Wagner family and his views polarize Germans, so with his wife and children he lives in Italy.

It is understandable that the generation of Germans who lived through the war want to avoid discussing Nazi Germany, said Gottfried. But if later generations do not speak up about the terrors their nation caused they are not being honest about history, then they are even falsifying history, said Gottfried Wagner. "We can only hide from this history or confront it," he says.

A day in ER: wisdom from an intravenous tube

S. Den Otter

My husband took me into emergency because I could not get an appointment with my own doctor. I had sort of determined that I was suffering from a gastro intestinal bleed. That nice term went down the drain went the ER doctor read the chart and said to me: "So, you pooped some black stuff." That was a very down to earth approach, a bit rude, I must say – as if I could not understand the proper term.

Anyway, it was determined that indeed I had been bleeding internally and that I had lost a lot of blood, so much that I needed two pints of blood. I was also dehydrated. It took all day for these life-restoring fluids to drip through my veins.

During those long hours I had to chance to reflect. I was amazed that my mind was so clear. Since my room was close to the desk, I watched as nurses charted and doctors scratched their heads as they went about their work. I watched as an ambulance driver flirted with the nurses and I thought how nice it was to be young and attractive and healthy. When you are stripped to a hospital gown you don't feel all that glamorous. But I was very grateful for the medical care.

Since I have worked as a staff chaplain in this hospital and still am on a casual basis, I am very familiar with this setting. I was thinking back to all those times that I walked through this ward checking if there was anyone who needed someone to be with them. Sometimes they were elderly people who were all by themselves and who felt lonely and frightened. Sometimes all that was needed was for me to hold their hand and say some encouraging words. Sometimes they asked for a prayer.

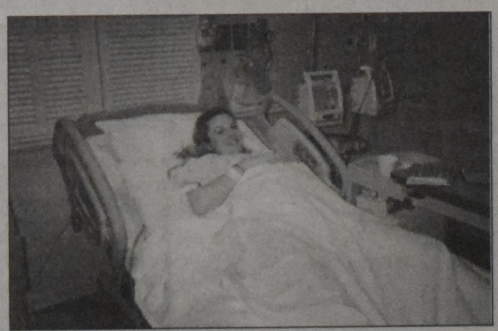
There were times that I was called for a death or after a serious motor vehicle accident. Then it was the family who needed someone to stand by who could serve as a liaison between staff and family members. Then came the difficult task to take them to see the deceased. Those were heart-wrenching times. A common question that was asked is: "What do we do next?" I could then sort of walk them through the steps that need to be taken after a death occurs. As soon as other family members arrived, I noticed, the tension usually diminished because then the burden was shared and the first shock was wearing off.

I thought of Anna, who seventy years ago gave birth to a very premature baby. Anna almost bled to death because it was a placenta praevia birth – that is the placenta comes first instead of the baby, a very dangerous complication in a pregnancy. In Anna's case a caesarean section became necessary and the mother and baby were saved. That baby grew up to the man who would become my husband and the father of our four children. All these things went through my mind as the drip continued.

Next to my room was the supply cupboard and someone was replenishing all the supplies – bandages, IV supplies, kleenex (I had picked up lots of those), blankets, and what all. I thought back to our visit to Cuba, where we were taken on a tour of a hospital where the lack of supplies and diagnostic tools was almost unbelievable to us who are so used to our health care system.

I was impressed with the professional skills of the staff and with the speed I was whisked through tests to determine the problem. I am recovering nicely and very thankful that I received good medical attention when I needed it. And again I am a bit wiser realizing that we can never take our health for granted and that we need to look after ourselves. Life can be snuffed out just like that, so let's use whatever time is granted to us appreciating that every day is a gift from God.

But with that gratitude also comes a responsibility to share whatever we can with those less fortunate than we are. And that sharing may take on many forms: donating blood, donating funds especially for help in third world countries where disease is rampant. Sharing of ourselves wherever God places us, reaching out to those nearby and far away, that is what it is all about.



A patient in the ER

The final reality,
and the ultimate fact
of our total situation to which
we need to be adjusted,
is God.
That indeed would be
my definition of God:
God is he with whom
we have ultimately to do,
the final reality to which
we have to face up,
and with whom we have, in
the last resort, to reckon.

John Baillie

Evangelicals have an image problem

Tony Campolo

A year ago, while on Harvard's campus, I asked one of the professors why the folks there were so negative toward Evangelicals. I said, "The Jews respect the Muslims, the Muslims respect the Jews and everybody respects the Dalai Lama. But there are sneers of condescension if someone says, "I'm an evangelical Christian!"

The professor answered, "Imagine yourself at lunch. Seated at the table with you is the leader of the Gay-Lesbian task force, an ardent feminist and an angry neo-Marxist African American. You propose playing a word game wherein each of them should respond to whatever word you mention, with the first word that comes into their minds. Then the first word you say is 'Evangelical'; how do you think each of them will respond?"

I said, given those three, I suppose I would hear them say things like 'bigot,' 'homophobe,' 'male chauvinist' and 'reactionary.'

Seeing Jesus in us

The professor then asked, "Now, to these same three, you say the name, 'Jesus!' What reactions will you get to that?"

I paused a moment and then said softly, "Caring, understanding, forgiving, kind, empathetic…."

"Does it bother you," he asked, "that the name of Jesus elicits a completely opposite reaction than the name Evangelical?"

That does bother me. However, when I explained how bothered I was to a fellow Evangelical he said, "I really don't care what people like that think about us!"

Of course, that's the point. While Evangelical Christians should never compromise what they believe in order to gain the approval of the secular community, they should care if people out there see little, if anything of Jesus in us. That being the case, we need to ask some very serious questions about ourselves.

Stereotypes

A friend of mine is part of a support group for parents whose children have AIDS. As this circle of brokenhearted mothers and fathers shared their concerns, one mother said, "My other sons don't know about their brother having AIDS. I'm not worried about the older one because he's so kind and affirming. But my youngest son has become an Evangelical Christian, and from what he's already said about homosexuals I know he'll be filled with contempt when he finds out about his brother."

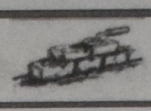
Last year, I had a debate with Gary Bauer on the campus of a leading Evangelical college and, in the course of our exchanges, I happened to say that America should show as much concern for justice for Palestinian people as we do for the security of Israel. I lost the Evangelical crowd on that one.

I try to point out to those critics of Evangelicalism that a lot of us do not fit their stereotypes. While we tend to be overwhelmingly pro-life, on the other issues a great minority of us are not part of the Religious Right. We are critics of the Bush tax cuts, which we see as a bonanza for the rich while necessitating cutting services to the poor (i.e. ending after school tutoring programs for 500,000 children). We want universal health care; advocate legal protection for homosexuals; oppose what we see as a growing militarism in America; and are appalled by this administration's environmental policies.

Unfortunately, the Religious Right controls the microphone. They own almost all of the thousands of religious radio stations across the country, and put on most of the religious television shows. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson are the celebrities of Evangelical broadcasting, and hence are primary definers to the rest of the world what it means to be Evangelical. Those of us who do not buy into their agenda either have to find a way to tell the world that there is a broad spectrum of types of Evangelicals, or we may just have to come up with a new name for ourselves if we don't like what the word "Evangelical" presently projects.

Circling

Building Trust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.



Vicky van Andel

Several weeks ago, on a Saturday morning, the women's group I belong to met at my home to celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of a new. We did this over coffee and the traditional year-end goodies. We had decided that our connecting theme for that morning would be the sharing with each other of the meaning of a special item we had brought along, or a personal experience close to our hearts. And so we ate and drank and listened and talked just as the spirit moved us. Two hours later, as we all put on our coats and boots and prepared to go our separate ways, we knew that we had experienced a new closeness and had truly been enriched by each other.

After our first cup of coffee, Janet (names and details are changed for privacy) chose to be the first woman to talk. She spoke of her favorite book *Five Smooth Stones* by Ann Fairbairn and showed us a delapidated paperback copy of this well-known novel. It was clearly well-read and had a cracked binding and curled pages. She told us she had read it six times in full, and many more times in part. She keeps it by her bedside to remind her of the wisdom and insight she finds in it. "The beautiful writing and colorful images keep my own life in perspective," she said. "That's why I like it so much and keep reaching for it."

Diane told us about her daughter's teenage pregnancy many years ago and how her family worked through that experience and was changed by it. She talked about her feelings as a mother at that time and the difficult decisions her daughter and family had to make. She showed how this experience had woven a special thread within the tapestry of her life and how it has enriched her life. "I know what it is like for a young woman to be pregnant and not married" she told us. "It has taught me to be very supportive." She also shared her sadness in that this year for the first time her children were not able to come home for Christmas. "But then, maybe I need to learn not to make an idol of my family," she said.

Mary had a happy-ending story about a locket she had lost ten years ago when she moved to a new house, and found back a week ago! The locket had been an old family heirloom and it had the only existing pictures of her grandparents in it. She proudly wore it and showed it to us! She talked about her feelings about losing it and her gratitude for finding it.

Joyce began her story by stating that her story was similar to Mary's but unfortunately didn't have the happy ending. She lost her mother's ring which had been a valued family keepsake. The ring was the first luxury item her mother, who until then had saved every penny for her family, had bought for herself after her children had grown up. She became tearful as she described how she spent an entire day retracing her steps looking for the ring. "But," she said, "maybe that is how we learn not to place too much value on material things."

Ellen talked about a family reunion she attended. She explained some of the struggles that had taken place within her family over the years, and remarked how it all seemed to have come together in such amazing ways. "God provides, and works in mysterious ways," she witnessed. "We have much to be thankful for."

Clara told us of her recent illness and hospitalization. She expressed much appreciation for the doctors and nurses who cared for her and for the healing powers of God. "The experience reminded me to value my health more consciously. I am thankful for my recovery though I still have to be careful and have some limitations," she said.

Sandra talked about losing her baby due to miscarriage. "I was hoping to be a big pregnant woman right now, and I'm not. I am sad about that. I love being pregnant. Some people tell me to get over it because I have two beautiful children already, but I can't. I am grieving the loss of a baby. I need to go through that grieving process. I can't pretend it didn't happen. I also have to accept that I will not have more children."

How does talking and listening to each other enrich us? Why do we keep coming together after all these years? Each woman in the group may have a different answer to those questions. However, we also most likely have answers in common. By sharing our joys we lift each other up. By sharing our sorrows we lighten each other's burden. By listening to each other we discover that we are not the only people in the world with worries. In fact, we learn that many of our anxieties are the same as those of other women. Being together helps us sort out our thoughts and feelings and gives us a clearer picture of life. Talking and listening puts our lives in perspective. We draw wisdom from each other to better chart our own course. We learn not to take life too seriously. To count and enjoy our blessings!

But above all a circle teaches us about ourselves. It challenges us to be respectful of other people. It challenges us to be empathetic, to listen without offering advice or without judgement. It challenges us not to interrupt when someone is speaking. It challenges us to honor each story just as it is told. It challenges us to communicate in ways that can be understood by other people. It challenges us to listen and to hear what is truly meant.

Women's circles have been around for a long time. They have a way of evolving. Often they are created because women have a common interest which draws them together. Circles have ups and downs and beginnings and endings. They are like waves of the oceans with high tides and low tides. The same circle may not meet a woman's need all the time. It can be good to take a break from them or join a whole new circle. Circles help us grow and growing is done at our own speed and in our own time.

A good book about the meaning and value of a circle is *Calling the Circle,* by Christina Baldwin. In this book, the author talks about the ancient ritual of circling and how we create a circle just by getting together with each other to talk about something. She also explains some of the difficulties that can arise in a circle and how to respond to them.

The circle I belong to consists of ten women between the ages of forty and seventy. We try to meet monthly, on a Saturday from ten in the morning until noon. Sometimes we meet in the same home, sometimes we alternate. The structure is loose. We have no leader, though one of us may bring a reflection. We participate by speaking or listening, as the moment moves us. We keep balance intuitively. We try to stick to two hours but tend to go overtime. Not for very long because duty calls. We have been together for approximately ten years. It's been fun. I highly recommend a circle for women who would like a truly serendipity experience!

Kidnappers release two Christian relief volunteers in Colombia

David Miller

MIAMI (Compass) – Two evangelical aid workers kidnapped on December 17 were released unharmed almost two weeks later after negotiators met ransom demands from the armed group holding them.

Yam farm in South America.

Sources in Colombia announced yesterday that attorney Juan Castilla Urueta, 31, and Jhony Jose Rios Anaya, a 39-year-old businessman, regained their freedom in exchange for a reported payment of 30 million pesos ($10,800).

"We write to you with Good News for the New Year," read an email from Justapaz, a community service ministry established by the Mennonite Church. "Juan Castilla Urueta was released December 30th, after 12 days of captivity."

"After negotiations assisted by the Colombian Mennonite Church and payment, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) allowed Juan to return to his family."

On December 17, a band of armed assailants entered "La Esmeralda" community farm near the city of Sincelejo and kidnapped Castilla and Rios while the two men were visiting war refugees there.

La Esmeralda farm is property of the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace of the Council of Churches of Colombia (CEDECOL). Established in 2001 as a haven for farm families displaced by political violence in the volatile Sucre department (state), the facility raises food and cash crops for the refugees.

Castilla is the son of attorney Maggie Urueta Ozuna, founding coordinator of the Sincelejo chapter of Justapaz. Three years ago, Mrs. Urueta resigned her position as public defender in Sincelejo and began working full-time to assist displaced families with meals, used clothing and primary education.

At the time her son was kidnapped, Urueta was in the United States seeking to develop an export market for yams that refugee farmers grow on La Esmeralda land.

The first positive sign that the kidnapping might be resolved without tragedy came on Sunday, December 21, when family members received a "message of life" from Castilla and Rios, who said they were alive and unharmed.

"Those most closely involved with the case have asked us to hold off on action," wrote Justapaz in a communiqué the following day. "These situations are very delicate and acting out of course can be inappropriate."

Meanwhile, Ricardo Esquivia, Justapaz founder and director of the CEDECOL Restoration Council, traveled to Sucre to aid in negotiating the two hostages' release.

"We did what we could," Esquivia told Compass. "It was enormously difficult, because you have to ponder if it helps to pay (ransom) or does not help.

"But at the end of the day, you have to place life before anything else. Of course, money is not as important as a life; but we run the risk that they might do this again in order to get more money."

In an open letter to supporters, Justapaz staff echoed Esquivia's anxiety regarding the crisis.

"This case is very worrisome in light of our work and, at the same time, illustrates the desperate need for the arduous and high-risk work of peace building."

Esquivia said that, after receiving ransom payment, the guerrilla group delivered Castilla and Rios to an undisclosed location in the jungle near Sincelejo at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, where family members had been instructed to meet them.

Esquivia expressed gratitude for international support in helping resolve the kidnapping.

"The community of faith is very important to us," he said. "To know that the international Christian community is supporting us, praying and communicating – that is a big help.

"In a country where the state itself does not have the capacity to guarantee security, we have learned to depend on God for help."

PHOTO: WWW.MENNONITECC.CA

Children displaced by violence in Colombia express their feelings through mime and dance.

Muslim extremists mount attacks in Northern Nigeria

Obed Minchakpu

DAMATURU, Nigeria (Compass) – Police and military units in the northeastern state of Yobe, Nigeria, ended a violent attempt by Muslim militants to carve out an Islamic Republic there.

During the first week of the new year, Muslim extremists allegedly affiliated with the Taliban movement in Afghanistan raided eight Nigerian towns and villages, attacking police stations, burning buildings and stealing weapons.

Authorities confirmed that two policemen were killed in clashes in which assailants carted off arms and ammunition. Church and government officials have not yet determined the number of casualties among Christians. However, they believe hundreds of families have been displaced from Damaturu, Kanamma, Geidam, Yunusari, Toshiya, Dapchi, Babbangida, Bursari and other villages targeted in the attacks.

"At about a few minutes after midnight on Wednesday, the people whom we believe to be Islamic fundamentalists attacked 'A' Division police station in Damaturu," Mr. Fatai Fagbemi, the police assistant inspector general in Damaturu, told Compass on January 1. "A few days back, they had been attacking police stations with a view to reaching the arsenal with arms and ammunition.

"A police inspector who was with the medical corps was killed by the fanatics. And early this morning, we trailed the fanatics. Along Maiduguri road, near Jakana village, we came across a vehicle they snatched from the police and abandoned on the way."

The car contained shotguns, rifles, two boxes of ammunition and tear gas canisters, according to Fagbemi. Two members of the Islamic group were arrested with weapons, he said, and the corpse of an extremist killed in a counter-offensive was recovered and deposited in the local mortuary.

The police officer declined to discuss the number of Christians killed by the fanatics. "This is a very serious, sensitive, and dangerous issue," Fagbemi said. "We cannot discuss this in the media. Religion is a volatile issue that calls for caution. Please do not report the religious angle of it."

Muslim fundamentalists calling themselves the "Hijrah (Migration) Movement" established a base near Nigeria's border with the Niger Republic over a year ago. Police sources said the fundamentalists pledged their loyalty to the leader of Afghanistan's Taliban, Mullah Umar. The group has since become known as "Nigeria's Talibans."

They designated their base as an "Islamic state" and distributed leaflets stating that they intended to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. They also vowed to kill all non-Muslims and declared a holy Islamic war on Christians and the national government.

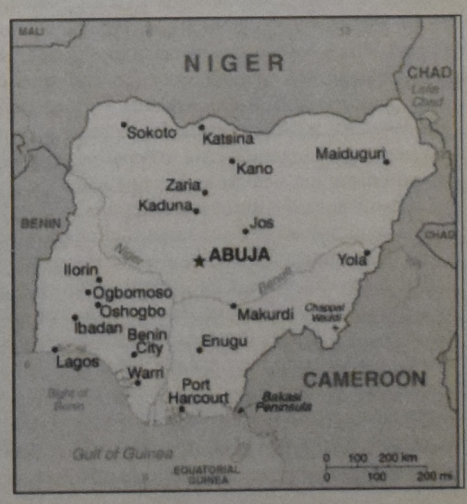
Referring to last week's attack, Governor Alhaji Bukar Abba Ibrahim told a press conference that the "Nigerian government is up to the task to deal decisively with any threat to national security."

Ibrahim, a Muslim, described the militants as "anarchists and trouble makers." "They will never succeed in their schemes. We shall crush them," he added.

Reports from BBC correspondent Mato Adamu in Yobe indicated that the Islamic group gained minimal support among Muslims. Last week's clashes have not led to increased tensions with the large Christian minority in the area, he said.

Twelve state governments in the Muslim-dominated north of the country, including Yobe, have introduced Islamic sharia law since Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999. The Islamic legal system has imposed a harsh religious atmosphere and sparked persecution against the minority Christian population in these states, according to sources in the country.

Incessant religious conflict, pitching Muslims and Christians against each other, has plagued the country since the imposition of sharia, claiming between 10,000 and 50,000 casualties, according to estimates.



Church

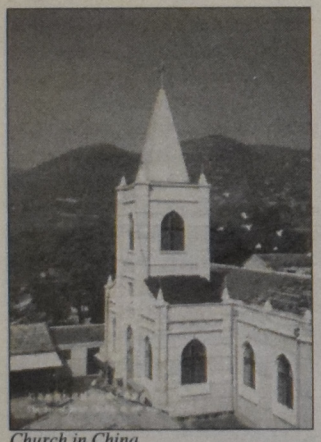
Letters from Chinese Christians reveal personal trials and triumphs

Guangxi

"Our meeting grew from a dozen to over 30, and the brothers and sisters were very loving – praying for and helping each other. But later, when we gave hospitality to evangelists from another province, some leaders said we were a cult and did not want to meet with us anymore. They even locked us out on Sundays! They said we should go to the Three Self (government-registered) church to meet. If we carried on holding house church meetings, then they would call the police to arrest us. They claimed that house churches were illegal, and if we did not register, we were not protected by the law.

"Later we were actually arrested. People were more fearful, so we split up. The brothers and sisters still asked me to read the Bible. Normally we listened to Bible school radio broadcasts from overseas and made notes. We desperately need commentaries to help our spiritual growth. Most of the Christians listen to gospel radio and get more from it than going to the Three Self church. Please pray for our church."

– Letter from Mrs. B. in Qinzhou City, dated March 10, 2003



Church in China

Heilongjiang

"We worship in the big Three Self church. The elderly Christians and the unemployed meet together for prayer, Bible study and hymn singing. But the Three Self leaders of the big church do not allow us to meet as we please. They have encouraged the government to arrest many people. The brothers were unable to argue a way out, and each of them was fined 1,000 RMB (approximately one month's wages for most people). The sisters were each fined 200 RMB. All were then released.

"After this we formed a house church. One day as we were meeting together in prayer, they entered the church and arrested believers. After the prayers, I stood up in the pulpit for the first time. I wanted to protect a young brother, as he was employed and would be heavily fined. I am a poor widow (I used to be a nurse) with no money even if they want it! I was detained for one day, and in the evening they released me. Later they arrested me several more times.

People worshiping at a house church in China

"The more I love the Lord, the stronger I become, and now I am learning to preach, even though many others are younger and better educated. We have six elderly brothers who are going out to the villages to preach, and some of the younger men are also being raised up to do this. Please pray!"

– Letter from Mrs. C, Shuangyashan City, dated August 29, 2003.

Hunan

"Ninety-five percent of the Christians in my area belong to rural house churches. The oldest Christians became believers 20 years ago. But we have never seen a proper pastor, and there is nowhere where we can get theological training. The government began to persecute us in 1998, arresting people, confiscating books and claiming we belonged to the "Shouters" group. In 2002, the Eastern Lightning cult disrupted the churches. The leaders from two of our three Bible study groups were won over by them.

"The situation has become very confused. Now, for example, five of the original Christian groups in the town have nothing to do with each other. False teachers have infiltrated and have even been ordained as preachers. The wife of a young believer is sleeping with another man, but just because she is gifted and can speak, she is allowed into the pulpit. I despair when I see the lack of discipline in the church."

– Letter from Mr. Wang, dated July 16, 2003

Sichuan

"Let me briefly explain our situation. I'm 60 years old and have been a Christian for six years. I live in the mountains and had a primary school education. I'm an ordinary peasant. We have a house church which was pastored by a city church. Every few months they came here to hold baptisms. Originally there were several dozen house churches together. But now those near the city are afraid of persecution. They are unwilling to bear the cross and follow the Lord. Instead they rely on the political rulers to protect them.

"So we have separated from them for more than a year. They want us to be registered with the authorities for "protection" and want our money to repair the church. As we do not attend the city church, they use the political power of the authorities to persecute us. They forbid us to meet. But God is with us and protects us – we have not stopped meeting! They have not arrested any of us. But we are very short of Christian books.

"Now here's some good news! My mother, aged 94, has come to faith in God and has set up a church in Jesus' name in her home. There are now three churches there. They are also persecuted by the authorities, and some have fallen away. Please pray for them, that God would revive his church. We are a Christian family. My son and three daughters and their grandchildren all received the Lord Jesus as their Savior and were baptized."

– Letter from Mr. Wei, dated March 6, 2003

Chinese house churches agonize over registration

Xu Mei

NANJING, China (Compass) – Registration is still a hot issue for China's long-suffering house churches. The government insists on registration as the only means of legal existence for Protestant and Catholic churches. In practice, registration means subjection to the Communist Party's Religious Affairs Bureau and other party organs, all of which are controlled by atheists.

In registered churches, evangelism, finances, the appointment of pastors, the content of theological training and Sunday sermons are all ultimately managed by the Religious Affairs Bureau. The degree of autonomy granted to churches, registered or otherwise, varies widely from province to province. However, according to the official policy of the Communist Party, total control of religious affairs is not negotiable.

A house church leader in Jilin province, northern China, recently wrote a letter summarizing the arguments for and against registration. Her letter vividly illustrates the dilemma faced by many house church believers.

"In 1994, a sister in our village voluntarily opened her home for house church meetings. In recent years, God has saved 40 to 50 brothers and sisters. At the end of 2002, officials from our county Religious Affairs Bureau and Public Security Bureau forcibly closed down our church because we had not registered with the government. They considered that our meeting in this way was illegal. If we don't register, we are not allowed to meet. We are only permitted to believe in God privately in our own homes.

"Several of our church workers have searched the Scriptures and believe it is not right for the church to register. Now our church is scattered and under persecution. If the church registers, it will be like a bride with two husbands.

"The Bible speaks of being subject to the governing powers. We believe as Christians we should positively pay all our taxes. But in matters of faith, the church cannot simultaneously follow Christ and be subject to the government.

"Our church leaders believe that the house churches walk the narrow way. Because of this, they suffer great persecution. But in a neighboring village, there is a big registered church set up 10 years ago. Based on Romans 13, their leaders believe the church should obey the higher powers and register with the government, as long as the government does not hinder them from preaching. Because the viewpoints of these two churches are so different, the leaders have no spiritual fellowship.

"Are our leaders' views correct, or do they contain extreme elements? Should the church register or not? If it registers, has it committed the crime of spiritual adultery? Does our lack of fellowship with the Three Self church constitute schism?"

Obviously, house churches in China need clear theological and practical answers to the dilemma of registration. Those who believe registration is contrary to biblical principles must find other ways to relate to the government and to defend their right to freedom of religious belief.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OPENDOORSUSA.ORG

A young Christian is baptized in China. Approximately 90 percent of Chinese Christians meet secretly in underground house churches because they do not want to be under regulation of the Chinese government.

Embrace opportunities for reflection and renewal

Lisa M. Petsche

"Each day, inside of me, God is moving, nudging, re-creating me." – Dorothy H. Bizer, poet

A hot topic at this time of year is New Year's resolutions: Have you made any? If so, have you begun to act on them yet? How do you plan to achieve them?

Some people scoff at the idea of making resolutions, or make them only half-heartedly, believing they are destined to fail.

Yet if we don't regularly make time for reflection and renewal (other good opportunities include birthdays and Lent), we risk leading a superficial existence that leaves us spiritually unfulfilled.

Still, the reality is that changing our habits is difficult, even when we anticipate a positive outcome, such as improved physical or mental health.

Making and keeping New Year's resolutions doesn't have to be an intimidating or frustrating exercise, though. Simply think of these goals as decisions that put into practice your values and beliefs.

Here's how to maximize your chances of success:

- Don't make resolutions hastily. Take time to reflect on what is and isn't working in your life. Do your day-to-day priorities reflect Christian values, or have you gotten off track in our fast-paced, materialistic, results-oriented culture? What lifestyle changes do you need to make?
- Don't go overboard. Prioritize goals and select only a few, so you don't lose focus or become overwhelmed. You can always add more later if things are going well.
- Be specific about what you want to happen – for example, "have regular time to myself" rather than "reduce my stress." The latter goal is too vague to act on, let alone evaluate.
- Frame goals positively, as in "eat more fruits and vegetables" rather than "give up junk food."
- Be realistic. For example, if you have small children, going back to school full-time right now may not be feasible. But it might be realistic to research program options, or perhaps even take one course via distance education.
- Break down each goal into manageable steps, and establish time frames for completing them. Be flexible, though – unexpected events may temporarily sidetrack you, but don't give up.
- Go public with your intentions, telling relatives and friends, to build in accountability and gather support. Even better, find someone who shares your goal and is willing to partner with you.
- Write out and prominently post resolutions, as an ongoing reminder. Take that first step right away. Don't wait until you feel motivated – just do it.
- Start small and build momentum. For example, begin with 5-10 minutes on home exercise equipment to develop a routine.
- Schedule regular time for implementing your plans.
- Track your progress using a journal, checklist or chart.

Aah .. I love my chicken salad diet

The most common resolutions are self-focused: stop smoking, go on a diet or exercise, to name a few. While self-care is important, include at least one goal that extends further.

How about resolving to spend more time with loved ones, which might necessitate leaving work on time instead of habitually staying late; finding a new job – perhaps one that's part-time or allows you flexibility; establishing and sticking to regular hours if you work from home; or relinquishing a volunteer commitment or maybe even a paying job.

Another great idea, if your kids are old enough, is to jointly develop one or two family resolutions. Examples include: spend more time together; engage in charitable works or social justice endeavors; reduce your ecological footprint; get involved in an environmental issue (my family has been supporting a campaign to prevent an expressway from going through a local valley).

Brainstorm how to accomplish your goals. For instance, you might spend more time together by having each member cut back on one extracurricular activity and establishing family meal times and game or movie nights. Or you might reduce your ecological footprint by buying less stuff, giving preference to second-hand goods and seeking ways to reduce your energy consumption.

Interestingly, one of the definitions for "resolution" is "the act or process of reducing to simpler form." What a wonderful guiding mission for the year ahead: that is, to streamline our hectic lives, in order to purposefully and joyfully devote more time and energy to building God's kingdom, as Christian parents and families.

To the wellsprings of joy: Taizé's letter for 2004

PARIS (Zenit.org) – *Translated into 57 languages, this letter by Brother Roger of Taizé was made public during a young adult meeting in Hamburg, Germany. It will be a starting-point for reflection throughout the year 2004 during the weekly meetings in Taizé and elsewhere.*

So many young people all across the earth carry within them a yearning for peace, for communion and for joy.

They are also mindful of the untold suffering of the innocent. They know all too well that poverty in the world is on the rise.

It is not only the leaders of nations who build the world of tomorrow. The most obscure and humble people can play a part in bringing about a future of peace and trust.

However powerless we may seem to be, God enables us to bring reconciliation where there are oppositions and hope where there is anxiety. God calls us to make his compassion for human beings accessible by the way we live.

If young people live lives focused on peace, a light will shine wherever they may be.

A spark which asks only to burst into flame

I asked a young man one day what he felt was most essential to keep him going in life. His reply was: "Joy and kind-heartedness."

Worry and the fear of suffering can take away our joy.

When a joy drawn from the Gospel wells up in us, it brings with it a breath of new life. We are not the ones who create this joy; it is a gift from God. It is constantly renewed by the look of trust with which God regards our life.

Kind-heartedness is not gullible; it requires us to be vigilant. It can lead us to take risks. It leaves no room for looking down on others. It makes us attentive to the very poorest, to those in distress, to the suffering of children. It lets us show, by the look on our face or by the tone of our voice, that every human being needs to be loved.

Yes, God enables us to make our way forward with a spark of goodness in the depths of our soul, a spark which asks only to burst into flame.

Contemplative waiting

But how can we go to the wellsprings of kindness, of joy, and also to the wellsprings of trust? We find the way by surrendering ourselves to God.

As far back as we look in history, multitudes of believers have known that, through prayer, God brings a light, a life within.

Even before Christ, a believer prayed, "My soul longs for you in the night, Lord; my spirit within me is seeking you." The desire for communion with God has been set within the human heart since the dawn of time. The mystery of that communion touches what is most intimate in us, reaching down to the very depths of our being.

And so we can say to Christ, "To whom would we go but to you? You have the words that bring our soul back to life."

Remaining before God in contemplative waiting is not something beyond our grasp. As we pray in this way, a veil covering the inexpressible realities of faith is lifted. And what lies beyond words leads to adoration. God is also present when fervor fades and when all perceptible resonance vanishes. We are never deprived of his compassion. It is not that God remains distant from us; we are the ones who at times are absent.

A contemplative gaze perceives signs of the Gospel in the simplest events. It discerns Christ's presence even in the most abandoned individual. It discovers in the universe the radiant beauties of creation.

"Love, and say it with your life."

Many people ask themselves, "What does God want of me?" When we read the Gospel, we un-

Continued on page 11...

Devotion

The model prayer

William L. Vander Beek

Since the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we have a marvelous freedom with respect to prayer: we may pray anywhere, anytime. And most Christian believers find prayers welling up in their hearts... anywhere, anytime.

But in practice we have a need to set aside certain occasions and places for our prayers, such as when a congregation meets for worship. "Congregational prayer" is a part of all orders of worship. For such prayers, too, there is a wonderful measure of freedom.

But that is not the whole story.

There is the freedom of the wild mustang, galloping at will in any direction, but there is also the freedom of the sun as it runs its orbit. Or is freedom usually somewhere in between these two extremes?

Does the idea of "free" prayer suggest that such prayer is wildly free, not bound by any rules?

What about the prayer we call The Lord's Prayer?

Another name for that prayer is the model prayer.

"This, then, is how you should pray."

Can we agree that in that prayer the Lord gave us directions about how to pray, directions which also apply to congregational worship?

We all recognize, do we not, that what we call the Lord's Prayer is not a prayer the Lord himself could ever pray ("Forgive us our debts"). Yet we are correct when we call this prayer-for-us a model prayer. The context in which this prayer occurs in the gospels, particularly in Luke (11:2-4), but also in Matthew (6:9-13), shows that it is the Lord's intention that this prayer give direction to all our prayers.

Let's first look at Matthew. In Matthew this prayer lesson is part of the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5,6,7). This whole "sermon" constitutes basic teaching on the part of Jesus. And according to Mt 6:9, Jesus introduces this prayer with, "This, then, is how you should pray." It is given to us as a model for our prayers. In Matthew, this is preceded by Jesus' rejection both of wrong motives (6:5-6) and of heaping up empty phrases (NRSV) or babbling in prayer (6:7,8). Clearly, this implies that in this prayer, Jesus sets a standard by which we ought to compose our prayers.

The same is true in Luke. In Luke's account (11:1-4), it is a specific request by one of Jesus' disciples which leads Jesus to teach this prayer: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

Teaching disciples how to pray is an expected part of a rabbi's or prophet's teaching ministry. The request in this story comes just after the disciples had heard Jesus pray. The disciple who then asks Jesus "Teach us to pray," realized that Jesus' way of praying was different even from John the Baptist's. And so he assumes that Jesus' teaching is not complete until he, too, has taught his disciples how to pray. So Jesus starts his answer with "When you pray, say...."

Being a disciple of Christ, thus, calls for distinctive prayer. The Lord's prayer is indeed intended as a model prayer for all who seek to follow him.

Petitions in congregational prayer

In that light, worshipers and worship-leaders alike must ask themselves: do the prayers we offer in congregational worship meet the standard Jesus holds before us in his perfect prayer?

If so, wonderful. When that happens in worship I rejoice, and my heart joins in with enthusiasm. But I am often also disappointed.

This is especially true when the congregation is asked to present prayer requests. For one thing, it then often looks as if sickness and other physical ailments are the main reason for our congregational prayer.

Am I saying that such problems are too unimportant for congregational prayer? No, such petitions (and thanksgivings) are proper. They can fit under the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." As the Catechism explains it: "Do take care of all our physical needs."

Yet, at the same time, congregational prayers should not be limited to pleas for physical healing, as they so often are. Why not?

We must not lift any of the petitions out of the context of all the other petitions of the Lord's prayer. This means that in all our prayers, our primary concern must be to give God the glory ("hallowed be...). The petition invoking the sovereign Lord's victory ("your kingdom come") and the doing of the Lord's will in sickness and in health must prevail. Physical healing may never be cut off from the fulness of Christian service. And our prayers must show this.

When Jesus commands, "This is how you should pray," we must learn to obey his instruction.

And when Jesus follows up the fourth petition ("daily bread") with "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (or the evil one), we must remember that believers may face very special temptations in sickness and tragic loss of health or life, and we must pray the evil one away from sickbeds. One danger in sickness is that our admiration for wonderful technology, and wonder-drugs and sophisticated surgery threatens our child-like trust in our God, the source of all these blessings. Also, when a serious cancer is diagnosed, extreme dread may so grip our hearts that only a powerful struggle can make any hope glow again.

So petitions for our physical needs must be hemmed in by the concern that "his will be done" and that the patient, and those surrounding the sickbed, may be delivered from temptation.

...to become his kingdom

One more point. I also regret the excessive attention to physical problems in a society where there is so much evil: so much violence, injustice, immorality, brainwashing, deceit. In such a world, we must ask 'How can we be prayer-warriors for the coming of the kingdom?'

This means, among other things, that in congregational prayers we don't devote all our time to internal "church-y" problems. Our kingdom prayers must take in the whole world in which we are placed. We must seek wisdom to discern how the world needs to be yet transformed by the Lord's power if it is to indeed become his kingdom.

At the beginning of a new year, we all do well to make the so-called Lord's prayer the model again, not just for our personal prayers but also for our church prayers.

The Catechism I quoted earlier teaches us to ask God, "Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect that in it you are all in all." Amen to that!

William Vander Beek lives in Langley, B.C. and writes on biblical and church matters from a Reformed perspective.

To the Wellsprings of Joy

...continued from page 10

derstand. God asks us to be a reflection of his presence in every situation. God invites us to make life beautiful for those he entrusts to us.

Those who attempt to respond to a call from God for their entire lifetime can say this prayer:

Holy Spirit, though it may well be that no one is built to live out a yes for ever, you come to kindle in me a source of light. At those times when the yes and the no clash, you shed light on my hesitations and doubts. Holy Spirit, you give me the strength to consent to my own limits. If there is an element of frailty within me, may your presence come to transfigure it.

And then we are led to dare to say yes, a yes that will carry us a long way. A yes that is transparent trust. A yes that is the love in all our loving.

Christ is communion. He did not come to earth to start one more religion, but to offer to all a communion in him. His disciples are called to be a humble leaven of trust and peace within humanity. In that unique communion which is the Church, God offers us all we need in order to go to the wellsprings: the Gospel, the Eucharist, the peace of forgiveness.... And Christ's holiness is no longer something unattainable; it is there, close at hand.

Four centuries after Christ, an African Christian named Augustine wrote, "Love, and say it with your life." When communion among Christians is a life and not a theory, it radiates hope. Still more, it can help sustain the indispensable search for world peace.

Communion is the touchstone

How, then, could Christians still remain divided? Over the years, the ecumenical vocation has fostered an invaluable exchange of views. This dialogue is the firstfruits of a living communion among Christians. Communion is the touchstone. It comes to birth first of all in the heart of hearts of every Christian, in silence and in love.

In the long history of Christians, at one point multitudes found that they were divided, sometimes without even knowing why. Today it is essential to do everything in our power so that as many Christians as possible – who are often innocent of the divisions – may discover that they are in communion.

Vast numbers of people have a desire for reconciliation that touches the very depths of their soul. They aspire to this inexhaustible joy: one love, one heart, one and the same communion. Holy Spirit, come and place in our hearts the desire to move forward towards a communion; you are the one who leads us to it.

On Easter evening, Jesus went with two of his disciples as they walked to the village of Emmaus. They did not realize at the time that he was walking alongside them. We too experience times when we are unable to realize that, by the Holy Spirit, Christ remains at our side. Tirelessly he walks beside us. He illuminates our souls with unexpected light. And we discover that, even though some darkness may remain in us, in each person there is above all the mystery of his presence.

Let us try to keep in mind one thing we can rely on. What is that? Christ says to each person, "I love you with everlasting love. I will never leave you. By the Holy Spirit, I will be with you always."

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Story

Shakespearean hockey

Ron de Boer

Back in the mid 80s I spent many weekends traveling through the sparse northwest Iowa landscape with my teammates on the Dordt College hockey team. I remember sitting in Shakespeare class on Friday afternoons drawing break-out drills and power plays in the margins of my Hamlet notes until our professor dropped his bi-focals into his shirt pocket and closed his lecture notes. I then stuffed my books into a gym bag and raced across an icy campus back to West Hall to fetch my suitcase and hockey bag for another road trip.

The rest of the team was huddled against the whistling northwest wind, smoking cigarettes or saying goodbyes to their girlfriends before boarding the bus. The Gray Goose took a few minutes to turn over and a few hours after that for the vinyl seats to soften up, and even though we could see our breaths clear into the next state during long January bus rides, the old girl always got us to arenas in South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska in time for the opening face-off.

She was a faithful old bird, a former local school bus, to which, legend had it, some depressed student in the college art department decided an iron gray paint makeover was in order. In contrast, the basketball team traveled in a sleek, cream colored Coach Line bus with velour seats, cup holders for their Gatorades and, best of all, a heater. But since every member of the hockey team was from Canada, the college figured the Gray Goose was a step up from the dog sleds to which we were accustomed. And so it was that the Gray Goose was my home-away-from home for four winters running.

Each American Thanksgiving the Dordt hockey team traveled north on a hockey playing/ recruiting mission for the college. To continue receiving our fifty or so dollar grant the college so generously gave us for running a team, we had to go out and make a good impression north of the border so that other Canucks would fork over their summer earnings for a liberal arts education in an Iowan cornfield.

It was during the American Thanksgiving trip to Winnipeg in my final year that the Gray Goose not only acted as our getaway vehicle in the early hours of a cold Winnipeg Sunday morning, but also delivered us to a deserted Minnesota roadside diner we called home for nearly twelve hours before facing the dean's wrath back at the college.

We arrived in Winnipeg on a Thursday afternoon and were billeted out to various CRC folk who guided us to our bedrooms and fed us hearty Manitoban beef and potatoes with apple pie and a piece of Dutch cheese for desert. After a semester eating recycled beans in the Dordt cafeteria, we thought – despite the frigid temperatures – that we'd ascended to heaven. For years, our Winnipeg hosts were second to none in hospitality, friendliness and accommodations. We shared a lot of laughs and were welcomed as members of the families to which we were billeted.

During our freshman year a teammate and I were called by Mrs. Billet to the supper table where Mr. Billet and the Billet children were already sitting. To his horror, my teammate was asked by Mr. Billet to say grace. A bit flustered at the prospect to begin with, he grew even more nervous when the Billet kids burst out laughing when he delivered the lines "keep us from harm and danger…amen." We were then informed that the next door neighbor's pit bulls were named Harm and Danger.

On Thursday and Friday night we played local CRC teams to packed arenas. These games were usually friendly affairs since our mission was of a recruiting nature. The college administrators, I sensed, were always a little nervous about the rather unpredictable behavior of Canadian hockey players. I remember getting into a scuffle with a South Dakota State University player during a game back in Iowa, and when I returned to the college, I was summoned to the campus library the following morning.

The head librarian, a nearly retired woman who ran the library like a state prison, called me into the reserved book room and informed me that she had been to the game last night and that she was not at all impressed with the manner in which I had conducted myself. And I could pass that along to my teammates, as well, she said. She should never have to see us dropping our gloves again. So, sending out hockey players on a recruiting mission was something like sending Vikings to chaperone a dance.

Back in Winnipeg, the marquee game on this weekend was a match-up with the local Bible Institute team. Anytime you put two college hockey teams on the ice together – Christian or not – fireworks are sure to go off. The game was played on the Bible Institute's campus. Before the game, the theology professors organized a communal pre-game meal during which we broke bread with the Bible Institute players in the campus cafeteria and then spent an hour or so sharing testimonials.

The Bible Institute players, with their perfectly combed hair and matching green suits, eloquently talked of their relationship with the Lord and their mission as Christians. By then, my Dordt teammates and I already had on our game faces, so I don't think the theology professors who organized "testimonial time" were much impressed with the two volunteers – both pre-seminary students – from our team who stumbled through their testimonials. I remember hearing one of the pre-sems later saying, "We don't do that sort of the thing in the CRC."

In the dressing room before the game, we could hear the fans above us chanting and cheering, and when we emerged from the tunnel we weren't at all prepared for the sight in front of us. On one half of the arena, Bible Institute fans crammed the bleachers, holding up signs and screaming as if the second coming was in full progress. On the other side of the arena, however, strangers erupted in cheers…for us. We had no idea who they were, but we later found out they were "townies" who hated the Bible Institute and cheered for every team who came in and played against them.

It was a game I'll never forget. These were the days of full contact hockey, when fighting was still part of the game, and if you wore a mouth guard you were considered a sissy. A couple of my present day scars were carved during that game. The Bible Institute players were smaller but quicker than our team, and took a 4-1 lead to the dressing room at the end of the first period.

But what we lacked in skill we made up for in good old Dutch CRC stick work.

During the intermission we decided to resort to the Don Cherry approach to the game – bullying and intimidation. The townies loved it. The Groot brothers from Smithers, "took (in hockey terms) the heads off" of every Bible Institute player who dared enter the Dordt zone in the second period. We ran guys into the boards, got our elbows up on every hit, and cross-checked any green shirt standing over our goalie after a whistle. We outscored them 4-1 in the second and so were tied 5-5 going into the final frame.

The third period was much of the same, but the Bible Institute boys didn't want anything to do with our physical and verbal taunting. By the time the third period buzzer sounded, the score clock showed DORDT – 9; BIBLE INSTITUTE – 5. If you'd seen our dressing room after that game, you'd think we'd won the Stanley Cup.

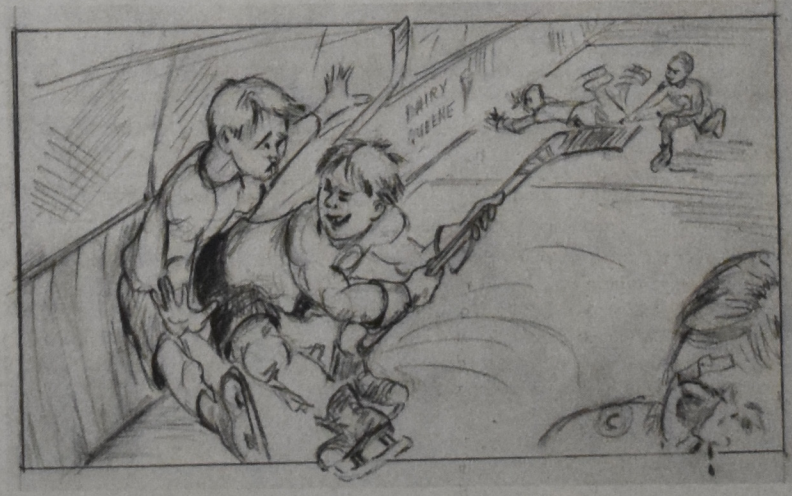
Now, in hindsight, I'm not particularly proud of the way we conducted ourselves that night, but that game soldered us together like brothers for the rest of that weekend and the rest of the season, for that matter. We were 21-year-old guys on the cusp of graduating to teaching jobs and seminary and we were sewing our final oats. If anyone on the team had stood up to say we should be more polite and responsible he probably would have gotten a puck in the mouth.

It was the euphoria of that Saturday night that nearly got us expelled from Dordt.

When we emerged from the arena an hour or so later, a Dordt student from Winnipeg invited the whole team over to his house for a celebration. He said why don't we crash for the night at his place.

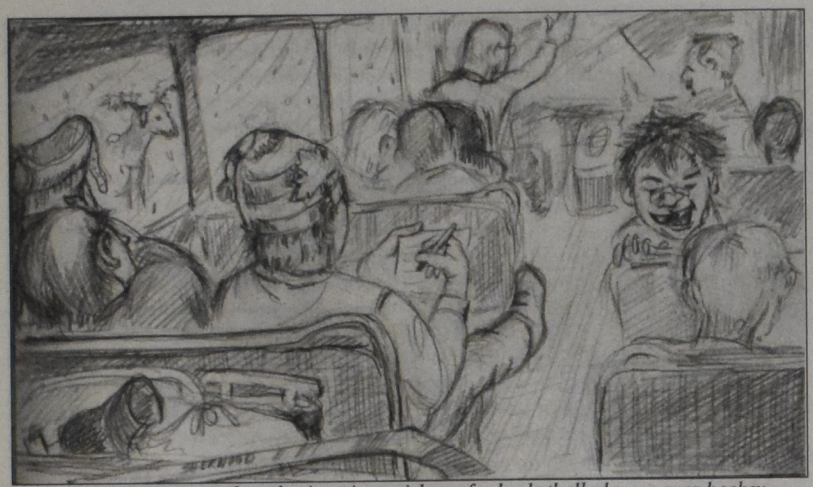
Our first mistake was deciding within ten seconds that we didn't at all want to stay in the campus dorms where our billets had dropped us off earlier that afternoon. We sprinted to the dorms, stuffed our clothes and personals into our suitcases and headed back to the Gray Goose. Our bus driver, a mature student at Dordt who held no authority over any of us, didn't dare stand in the way of the bloodied and bruised hockey players headed toward where he was sitting on the bus.

After a few hours laughing and retelling stories of every elbow, cross check and hit-from-behind on every Bible Institute player, someone made a sugges-



"Let me offer you the other cheek."

Humor



"Hey Ron, you ever wonder why American girls prefer basketball players over hockey players?"

tion that proved to be our second big mistake. "Why wait until Sunday afternoon to head back to Iowa? Let's go right now. We can take turns driving the bus and be there by morning!" It was the bus driver in charge of us who said it. Never mind that none of us had a license to drive the bus. Like caribou, we stampeded out the door and onto the Gray Goose and looked for a sign pointing us to the American border.

Little did we know of the preparations underway in the local Winnipeg Christian Reformed Church to welcome the Dordt College hockey team during the Sunday morning service. Little did we know that in a few hours a minister would be nervously glancing around the church sanctuary after asking the Dordt hockey team to stand up for a big Manitoba welcome. And little did we know that tiny triangle egg salad sandwiches had been piled on little plates and set out on basement tables, that coffee pots were perking, and that someone from church council had prepared a little speech for us before we embarked on our trip back to Iowa.

This was all written in the letter the Dean later read us after summoning us to his office.

Instead, we were all watching our mature student bus driver scratching the ice off the windshield so he could see the snow-blanketed highway in front of him.

Around three a.m. snow flakes had begun falling; by dawn, the highway was covered and spikes of snow were driving toward us; by mid-morning, the drifts reaching across the highway tossed us like an old ship on the high seas.

For the first time in the last twenty-four hours, we made a wise decision. We pulled over at the sight of the first pale yellow light. Attached to the pale yellow light was Belinda's Roadside Diner with a couple of old style gas pumps out front. Our student bus driver skidded up to the pumps and we all piled out for Root Beer and Doritos.

When we opened the door, Belinda looked up in surprise.

"Where did y'all come from?" she said.

"Winnipeg," one of the guys said.

"Roads have been closed since last night," Belinda said.

"We didn't see any signs," another of the guys said.

"That's because it's so bad even the road guys aren't out," Belinda said.

We told Belinda we were a college hockey team headed for Iowa from Winnipeg. She smiled immediately. Belinda's two boys played hockey.

"This is the worse storm in years. You fellas are lucky you didn't get stranded and freeze to death out there."

Just then our student bus driver came stomping into the diner. "You guys ready to go?" he said.

"I ain't lettin' ya'll go out in that," Belinda said in her stern motherly voice. "You kids set yourselves down and I'll make you something hot for your stomachs. Regular morning breakfast crowd ain't comin' in today anyway, and the bacon's gonna go bad if I don't use it up."

Belinda cooked breakfast. The smell of bacon and eggs filled the diner. She poured us orange juice and brewed us fresh coffee.

Several of us donned aprons and hopped over the counter to scoop scrambled eggs onto plates and flip French toast. The Groot brothers made fresh pots of coffee between cigarettes. Outside, the wind howled. We couldn't even see the Gray Goose the snow was blowing so badly.

Belinda seemed more than happy to accommodate us that day. She opened an upstairs room where there was a little TV and several chairs and sofas. Some of the guys played euchre while others, still nursing injuries from the game the night before, fell asleep on the sofas.

That evening, Belinda cooked us supper and told us we were welcome to sleep the night.

Our student bus driver, however, had been eyeing the sky all afternoon and had decided the worst was over. We were all anxious to get back to campus. Even though it was still snowing, we had seen a snow plough roar past the diner, and we figured the highway was clear again. We fired up the Gray Goose, hugged Belinda – our guardian angel – and took to the highway again.

For the next hundred miles all we saw were cars and transport trucks flipped on their sides or buried in snow in the ditch. Somehow, despite our fool-hardiness of skipping town and persisting through a raging Minnesotan snow storm, the Lord had taken care of us, and did so in the form of a woman who, for some reason, as she told us at supper, had stayed open in case someone happened along in the cold.

A week later, I was cramming for finals in my dorm room when the college dean called. "Stop by my office in an hour," he said. I was one of the team's captains so was one of the privileged few to read the letter from the church. All we could do was hang our heads and admit we were idiots.

He looked at the three of us – a future teacher, a future minister and a future businessman – and just shook his head.

We said we were sorry.

He said that didn't make things any better.

We fully expected that the college administration would pull our status as a club team.

Instead, the dean said, "Have you seen this yet?"

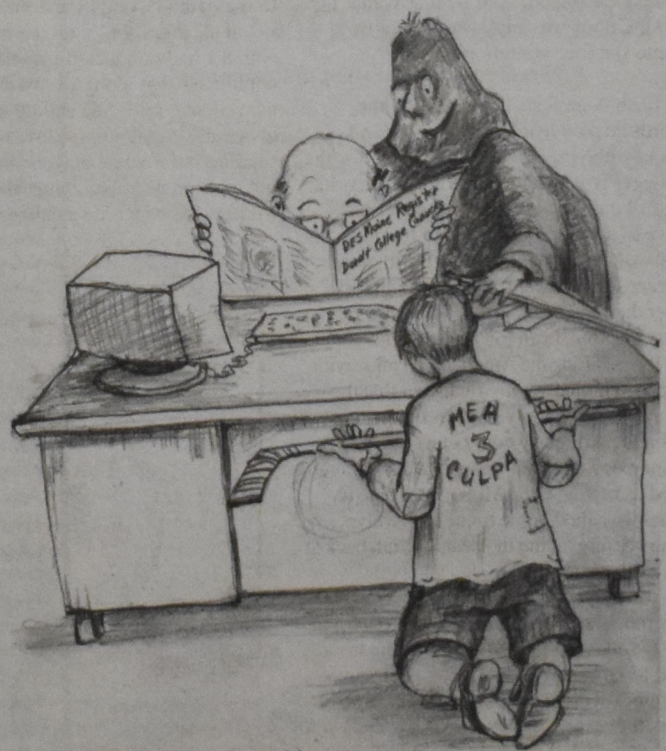
He pulled out a newspaper – the Des Moines Register. On the cover of the sports page was an article about the Dordt College hockey team that I had written and sent to the newspaper a few months before. I had written about the uniqueness of an American college hockey team roster that was full of Canadians and how we traveled all over the Midwest and into Canada playing the game we loved for a school we were proud of.

The article had been published that day.

"A little ironic, isn't it?" the dean said. His eyebrows stayed halfway up his forehead for too long. "This article appearing on the same day this letter arrives."

You didn't have to be an English major to know that ironic meant lucky. All we had to do was sign an already written letter of apology for our bad judgement which was to be sent to the church in Winnipeg. As a result of the article in the Des Moines Register, the hockey team actually enjoyed a rare couple of weeks of celebrity status. Even my Shakespeare professor said he might take in a game yet that season.

Our hockey team was a lot like a Shakespearean tragedy – a lot of drama and comic relief, a fair bit of blood. And, in the case of our ill-fated journey to Winnipeg, some lessons learned about responsibility.



"Well, now Ronnie, in view of your heart-felt penitence..."

Politics

The Ontario Liberals and the shameful repeal of the tax credit

John Vanasselt

You have probably heard the story of the farmer who boasted he could get his mule to do whatever he wanted. When confronted by a sceptic he took a brick and hit the mule right between the eyes. "First you have to get his attention," he said.

Well, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals have gotten the attention of all those who support Christian education. The retroactive removal of the equity in education tax credit was a real slap upside the head.

For half a century Christian school parents in Ontario have, in one way or another, appealed to government for educational justice – and achieving justice has always meant more than money. Justice means the explicit recognition that parents have the primary responsibility for their children. Justice means overt appreciation for the fact that parents are the best people to make educational decisions for their children. Justice means respect for, and trust in, parents. Justice means open acknowledgment that Christian education is in the public interest. A method of financial support which keeps intact the integrity of the Christian school is simply the government's way of implementing justice.

Think about this: The tax credit was law. The law was entitled, *The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act.* Since January 1, 2002 Christian school parents have had a legally-entitled right to receive a tax credit for a portion of the tuition paid for the education of their children. These parents still paid their full share of provincial taxes to support public education. This law strengthened families, and in a democracy we can do no better than to strengthen families. By supporting parental choice and requiring schools to publicly disclose all pertinent information about operations and program, this law achieved the type of educational justice sought by Christian school supporters this past fifty years.

Slap! Slap!

Now one might think that when a government decides to remove a legal right from an identifiable minority, politicians would go out of their way to explain the compelling reasons that forced them to do so. After all, not only did they remove this legal-made-in-Ontario-solution, they returned to the deliberate state-sponsored discrimination that was condemned by the United Nations in 1999. Taking away a legal right is serious business; worthy of a clear explanation. So did we hear those compelling reasons? Nothing of the sort. Just that slap! The best we heard was, "We want a magnificent public education system," and "We have great plans for public education." Great! But what does that have to do with the tax credit? All over the western world governments support public education and parental choice at the same time. Why not in Ontario?

Former Premier Ernie Eves greets children at the Christian School in Smithville, Ontario

Here is something else to think about. The election was in October, but the Liberal government clawed way back to last January – ten months before they were even elected! They retroactively took dollars away from the low and middle income families who needed them most. These parents had made decisions about family budgets long before Mr. McGuinty was elected. Difficult choices that involved budgeting for Christian school tuition, fixing the roof on the house, and repairs for the family car, were made before anyone even knew there would be an election, and these choices were made thinking the tax credit would be in place at least until after an election. Surely no government would change the rules in the middle of the game. Surely no government would be so mean-spirited as to single out one group of citizens to pay more tax not only next year, but this year as well! Guess what? Slap! Slap!

Prior to the introduction of the tax credit, most Christian school supporters simply felt ignored. After all, government had not singled them out specifically; things were just left as they had always been. What the Liberals have done changes everything.

First of all, for two years and counting, Christian school parents have been incorrectly described in a way that suited the arguments of the Liberals. When the tax credit was announced, Mr. McGuinty immediately portrayed all independent school parents as "elite, wealthy, or exclusive." He has done nothing since that time to present an accurate depiction of the hard-working low and middle income families who make up the bulk of Christian school enrolment. This continual misrepresentation is offensive to Christian school parents. "Tolerance!" cry the politically-correct, but honesty and respect are evidently not required.

Secondly, by removing the legislated right to a tax credit, this government has, in fact, singled out independent school parents for unequal treatment. No longer are Christian school parents being ignored. Now they have been identified as part of the group that will pay more taxes. Now the government has said, "We will not support you as you nurture your children to be good citizens. You're on your own, and we will raise your taxes."

Finally, Christian school parents now find themselves violated. Now they cannot claim to be treated with equal dignity, as should be the right of every citizen. Now they are the victims of a deliberate government policy of state-sponsored discrimination – the type denounced by the United Nations in 1999.

Continuing the struggle for justice

On the very day the government brought Bill 2 to the house for second reading, the Attorney General made a speech celebrating human rights. "This is a day to remember we all have a part to play in ensuring equity and fairness in our society. It's a day to recognize the inherent right of all the world's citizens to a life of dignity, equality, tolerance and non-discrimin-ation....We've become one of the most diverse communities in the world, and this government will take action to strengthen our international reputation as a province of tolerance, civility, and respect." Leaves a bad taste, doesn't it?

So now what? Where do we go? Do we fold our tents and leave?

No! As public advocate for Christian schools, Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) will work with other faith-based school groups to seek both legal and political avenues to educational justice. This means exploring provincial legalities as well as those laws of the land that were established when Canada signed international treaties at the United Nations. This means ongoing discussions with government and opposition MPPs. This means continuing the media strategy of keeping accurate information about Christian schools and parental choice in the public eye.

Parents should continue to contact MPPs from all parties. These people were elected to be your representatives in government, and they are under obligation to consider your views. Further, your vote in the next provincial election will be important to them. We know parental involvement was a huge factor in acquiring the tax credit in the first place and it will be a key element in redirecting government towards educational justice again.

For half a century, Christian school parents and supporters have struggled for educational justice, and the Lord has blessed our efforts. Over forty years ago, OACS negotiated agreements with the Minister of Education to allow Christian schools to host practice teachers from Ontario's teachers' colleges for purposes of certification. Since that time agreements have been reached with the federal government about charitable donations, Christian high schools won the legal battle over religious credits, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled provincial governments could support all parental choices in education if they want to, health support services for special needs children are funded by government, and until now the tax credit supported parents in their choices.

We take our lead from Nehemiah and Paul, and ask the Lord for his continued blessings on this road to educational justice. We will submit to the authorities. We will not revolt or foment rebellion. We will however, not go away. We will continue to seek justice, diligently and persistently, for those who choose Christian schools.

John Vanasselt is Director of Communications for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools

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Music/Sports

Johnny Cash cashes in

When Johnny Cash died in September of 2003, the tributes and accounts of his life revealed an individual unusual for his integrity in life and artistry. It is unique for someone so successful in worldly terms, as was Cash, to not eventually be consumed by the acclaim and wealth. Not that he was immune to the illusions and temptations. But he seems to have avoided adopting a formula for pumping the system for what he could get. Cash persisted in writing and making music with meaning for the common person, the oppressed and the disadvantaged. To underline that he always dressed in black. And throughout he was unapologetically motivated by his allegiance to Jesus Christ.

True, Johnny Cash stumbled and fell badly, even in worldly terms. In the liner notes for a CD made entirely of "sacred" music, ten years of his life are documented as wandering in a wilderness of drug and alcohol abuse. Cash gives account of that too in the preface of his book about the apostle Paul, *Man in White*. He gained an unfair reputation as a troublemaker and a jailbird (though his incarceration was never more than overnight) that he could never entirely shake off. Perhaps one reason for that is that Cash was not about to pretend he was anything other than a sinner saved by grace, but the press does seem preoccupied with creating outlaw persona.

Tithing Cash

When it came to articulating what he was about, Cash was not shy. He started out wanting to be a singer of gospel music. His producer assured him he would not be able to make a living at it. So Cash came back with songs about marital fidelity ("I Walk the Line"), absentee fathers, ("A Boy Named Sue"), the justice system ("Folsom Prison Blues") and so on that early on made him the best-selling recording artist of his time.

The gravel-voiced singer did persevere in recording gospel music by "tithing" his music, as he put it. As to the tithing idea, perhaps the readers of CC would not go along with that because of the view that all a Christian does should be devoted to the Lord. Cash, however, undoubtedly saw "tithing" as a way to maintain his identity and speak to a large audience. He was not a compromised artist, but one who found a way to retain his true identity.

Johnny Cash also identified himself as "not a Christian artist, but an artist who is a Christian." On the surface that distinction may not seem to some to be biblical either. However, a difficulty for performing artists is that the music industry and the press feel compelled to pigeonhole them. Cash defied that classification by not paying attention to the genre of the songs he chose to perform and record. He therefore is one of few inducted into both country and rock music halls of fame. He did not fit into and likely did not want to be slotted into the "Christian" music genre because it would be a restricting and inaccurate description. His was a devotion that included all that he did and therefore he reached a greater audience with a fuller gospel.

Cash in black and white

The story is that after coming out from years of substance abuse and aimless living, he confided in his friend, Billy Graham, that he would like to become an evangelist. Graham, who obviously has an appreciation for the broader implications of the gospel though he himself is committed to presenting the most elementary salvation message, counseled Johnny to keep on doing what he was doing. Anyone who has an appreciation for the work of Johnny Cash is thankful that he then continued recording music that was meaningful to him right up until the time of his death.

The title song on one of his last CDs, "When the Man Comes Around," took Cash months (years?) to write. During the course of that time he wrote dozens of pages of words for the song. He says it was painful for him to have to "weed it down" to what we have today. The song is loosely based on the book of Revelations. It is a moving and poetic picture of the terror for those who reject the Truth and the joyful relief and reception of those who embrace Him. Included in the mix of the remainder of the CD, which is mostly what some would call "secular" music, is a song startling in its graphic description of a convicted murderer on the gallows damning everyone there for his predicament, including his mother. It is a stark depiction of someone guilty of a heinous crime suffering the consequences and accusing all who somehow contributed.

Consistent to the end, Cash presented redemption (the title of another of his recent CDs) complete with sin and the consequences of no repentance.

The man in black is now the man in white. As the man in black his interest was in redemption. As the man in white redemption for him is complete.

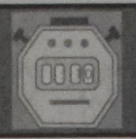
P. S.: You may wonder about this column departing from rural themes. Johnny Cash did some country singing it is true, but he also grew up working with his family scrabbling a living from a poverty-stricken cotton farm. A recruiter for a foreign missions society said that the most effective missionaries are farm kids. Enough said.

v.m.g.

Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, AB

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



A tale of two idiots

For someone like me who follows sports semi-religiously, you'd think I'd get sick of all the stuff that's wrong with it. I am tired of a lot of things and have raged against them off and on for the past seven years in this column: arenas named after corporations, ridiculous salaries, Internet sports polls (to name a few).

But a couple of events happened in the past few months that have given me some happiness. Actually, it wasn't the events themselves that were so wonderful but the response to them that warmed the deeply cynical cockles of my heart and restored some measure of confidence in mankind.

They just benched him

The first event was back in November. A wide receiver for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers by the name of Keyshawn Johnson had been strutting around the NFL for a few years already, telling everybody how good he was and once in a while even proving it. He even wrote a book (or rather, had one written) called, "Just Give Me the Damn Ball" – a moving portrait of a rookie football player's struggle to get enough time in the spotlight and thereby achieve self-glorification. During this current season, Keyshawn had had a few run-ins with his coach, Jon Gruden. He felt he wasn't getting the ball enough and that he wasn't getting the attention he deserved.

The management's response defies NFL logic: they benched him for the rest of the season. The general manager said that Keyshawn's "approach and his actions are having a negative affect on our football team." End of story. No appeasing the superstar. No negotiations with his agent. They just benched him. That takes guts and integrity, and they've taken a lot of heat for it. But it seems that a lot of people are impressed by it. I think it's great.

Player self-glorification

In December, Joe Horn (another wide receiver) had just scored his second of four touchdowns for the New Orleans Saints against the Giants. Michael Lewis, his teammate, ran over to the goal post, lifted the padding around it, and fished out a cell phone that Horn had hidden inside. He handed it to Horn, who pretended to make a celebratory phone call. For starters, Horn was lambasted by Jim Haslett, his coach. Haslett said later that he was disgusted that Horn put himself before the team. The NFL also fined him $30,000.

The most encouraging news, however, was that many fans thought his actions were stupid and tacky.

It is nothing new, of course, for football players to celebrate touchdowns with silly antics. Last season, Terrell Owens, a receiver for the 49ers, pulled a pen out of his sock and signed the football before passing it to his accountant in the stands. In the mid-80's, the Chicago Bears did the "Super Bowl Shuffle" in the end zone after scoring. It seems, though, that fans may be starting to grow weary of player self-glorification and may actually value some degree of humility.

I don't pretend to have all the answers for how a player should show integrity and respect on the field. I don't have the blueprint for what a Christian touchdown celebration looks like. I'm just cursed with a Dutch intolerance for self-celebration. For me (and, it seems, an increasing number of others), it's getting sickening to see spoiled, yappy posers show off night after night and chirp at their opponents. It's selfish and it's stupid.

Maybe if I was trying to make a name for myself in professional football, I might pull off some lame stunt too. But I hope respect for myself and the game would stop me.

Tim Antonides teaches and coaches at Surrey Christian School in BC.

Franciso brings the good news to his fellow tribesmen

A single child's Bible study in the hands of one lowly Wichi tribesman has begun a gospel revolution potentially touching an entire tribe in northern Argentina.

Twelve years ago a young Wichi tribesman, then 25, responded to the gospel proclaimed by Argentinean missionaries doing personal evangelism and distributing tracts in a small town 1600 km. north of Buenos Aires. The young man was named Francisco.

A short time later the Argentine mission's office received a request from Francisco for a single Children's Bible Course in Spanish. Francisco apparently did not feel worthy – nor fluent enough in Spanish – to request the adult course. Even so, the mission sent the adult course called "El Camino Hacia Una Vida Feliz" ("The Way to a Happy Life").

At the same time Francisco asked for some evangelistic literature to help him share the gospel with his Wichi people. He said he would give the literature to those who could read Spanish, and he would personally translate the material into Wichi for the rest of his community who could not read Spanish. So some tracts and booklets were sent.Soon they received a request for 20 more copies, then 30, then 50. Packages of evangelistic and follow-up material were being sent to Francisco regularly.

Two years later, in 1993, Rino Bello, AMA's director, was conducting an evangelism training seminar in a city located 800 km from Francisco's village and invited him to attend. This would be the first time the two men would meet face to face.

"I can still remember the day he arrived at the seminar," Bello said. "He was a simple young man with a slow but steady walk. After introducing himself he commented that he had traveled six days to get there. He walked and hitchhiked in trucks and cars until he finally arrived at the location. Despite his long trip, he didn't look tired, but instead was thankful that the Lord had kept him safe."

Francisco told Bello he had told hundreds of Wichi people about the gospel, and that in the intervening two years time he had baptized hundreds of Wichi converts. His testimony so impressed Bello that Bello decided to help him financially for the next two years.

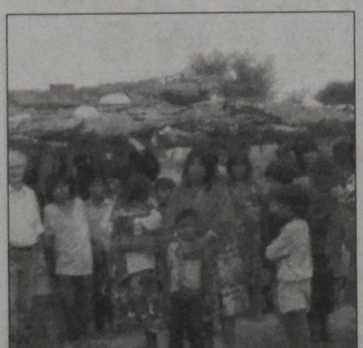
Later, Bello decided to visit Francisco's village and see for himself this work among the Wichi. The Wichi are a despised and impoverished people group, the poorest of the poor, that live in northern Argentina. They suffer from degrading poverty, rejection by others, and low self-esteem. Francisco belongs to a clan that numbered 10,000.

Francisco is now president of the Aborigine Community of his region and is a member of the Aborigine Pastors Committee, an organ sponsored by the national government to promote the development of the aboriginal communities. Working with AMA, he oversees vocational projects such as brick making and bricklaying, and flower and vegetable gardens. With help from Christian Aid, AMA also offers public health and first aid courses, school scholarships for children and regular evangelism and discipleship training.

The families reached with the gospel showed a radical change in their life style. AMA missionaries encouraged the Wichi to maintain their cultural identity in all ways that do not conflict with Christian practice and principles. And Francisco wrote a booklet that compares Wichi culture with the gospel. In it he advises fellow Wichi believers to forsake the services of the shaman and go only to prayer and/or to the doctors and hospital if they get sick. The mission soon hopes to assign a missionary nurse to the Wichi area.

Today, some 4,000 Wichi have accepted Christ, including 3,500 who have followed the Lord in baptism. Francisco and 19 fellow Wichi gospel preachers now look after 41 churches touching 45 communities. The goal of each is to reach out to another tribal community in their area.

To learn how you can help, write insider@christianaid.org



Visiting a Wichi village in Argentina

My Dutch Cousin

My father was born in North Dakota and my mother in the Netherlands over a century ago. They both became settlers in Southern Alberta shortly after 1900 and lived the rest of their lives there. So my distance from the Netherlands is rather great. But I've been to the Netherlands about ten times through the years and in the process I've come to know many Dutch people, and found some Dutch cousins. We are related in that we share one set of great-grandparents. I do not know how to determine the times we are removed as cousins, but cousins we are!

I especially want to tell you about one of my Dutch cousins who has achieved a fair amount of stature in the Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands (GKN) as a minister and a professor in their seminary. His name is not relevant to my story so I will withhold it. Anyone really interested may enquire and I'll provide it. Let's just call him "Hendrik."

Hendrik is a very erudite man having attained a respectable Doctor's degree in theology and having taught theology for many years. In addition he has written extensively. His books cover half a shelf in what is left of my library. It seems he has turned out a new book about every six months since his emeritation.

A short while ago he published a real shocker in which he revealed some of his most radical theological ideas. I was dumbfounded to find that he has very little place for some of the fundamentals of the faith. In an interview with the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* he openly stated that there is no resurrection, no life after death, and no real heaven. The only way we live on is in the memory of our children. This all follows from his belief that Jesus did not rise from the grave in newness of physical life. Therefore there is no such life for us.

All this is nothing new in the theological world of the last 100 years. What is new and shocking is that Hendrik believes this is the message of the Bible. He claims that on the basis of a proper reading of the Bible he has come to this position.

At this point one is quick to propose that Hendrik should take a simple course in how to read. The message of the Bible is so clear: How could anyone come to his position? But then we must be introduced to the vagaries of modern biblical interpretation, something for which I have little time and no appreciation.

But then I was in for another shocker. Hendrik is still a rather popular preacher and well appreciated. I have read some of his sermons and have been edified by them. But then I learn from him that when he makes a sermon he exegetes and preaches the text and does not superimpose his theology on the text. So on Sunday he is a preacher of the word and on Monday to Friday he is a philosophical theologian, and it seems those two never really meet. I do not know what he is on Saturday when he is getting his sermon ready for Sunday.

Now I had suspected for a long time that cousin Hendrik was tilted a good bit to the left of center on the theological spectrum, but when the full revelation of his deviation hit me I was unable to sleep well for nights on end. It was the most depressing news I had heard in years. Hendrik was after all not just a distant cousin – he was a close friend.

We have visited him and his family several times and he visited us three times. I once took him and his son on a trip from Grand Rapids all the way up to LaGlace, Alberta, to let them live into the journey of my pioneer ancestors, also their relatives. And when I was extremely ill he came to visit me. We are very close friends. To find such error in the bosom of a friend is a blow from which it is not easy to recover.

And of course it was not a reality which I could finally accept and shrug off. I determined that the price of friendship is full honesty and open communication. So I immediately began a discussion with him about his position and my conviction that he was walking in the way of devastating error. I entered this encounter not unlike David going against Goliath, for I have no special expertise in theology. But I went with a prayer and a confidence that in this struggle I, like David, also was on the Lord's side. And I continue doing my best to humbly but directly challenge a friend return from the error of his ways.

Our exchanges have been going on for over a year now and there have been some rocky roads and dangerous impasses but we are still friends, and I have not given ground. He considers me very stubborn in my dedication to the old ways, which I freely admit and for which I make no apologies. With some help from a theologian-friend I am holding up my theological position as well. We actually have three-way exchanges in which he really stands alone.

And I pray for Hendrik and for his church. 50 years ago, if anyone would have published a book denying life in the hereafter he would have been deposed from the GKN ministry. That has now completely changed. Professor Harry Kuitert has asserted that God is the creation of us human beings and it barely raise an eyebrow. The GKN has heard him propound blatant heresy for decades and pays no attention to him. The only discipline that is still possible is the private kind in which someone willingly puts a relationship on the line in order to preserve the faith. And that will have no success unless the Lord answers the prayers of his people for the salvation of his church.

Therefore I request that all who read this should pray earnestly for Hendrik and all the other wandering souls who need to return to the fundamentals of Reformed biblical truth in our seeking the Kingdom of Christ, and for the GKN*, and for the CRC in its struggle to keep the faith!

** The GKN has recently undergone a union process and is now part of the United Protestant Churches of the Netherlands.*

Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Opinion

Yes . . . but

Bert Hielema

Oil, elections and predictions

What's in store for 2004?

Wouldn't you like to know!

Of course we can only predict things after they have happened, and even then we are often wrong. So to tell what will take place in the future is a very risky business. Yet we can take some cues from what has transpired in the past, because every cause has a certain effect. A simple example. When a person has, say, $100,000 in the bank and spends $20,000 each year, then we can predict with a great degree of certainty that he or she will be broke in 5 years.

So let me apply this every day occurrence to today's world. In November the British newspapers were ecstatic: The British government had given approval to develop the biggest oil deposit discovered in its territory in a decade: 400 million barrels of oil in a North Sea field. Wow, you might say: that'll keep us going for quite a while. Well, in the year 2004 we happen to burn 76 million barrels each day and each year our thirst increases. A simple division: 400:76 indicates that this huge find will last us exactly 5 days, 6 hours and 31 minutes.

Oil, oil, oil

The sobering truth is that the discovery of new crude oil reserves peaked in the 1960's. Now 40 years later we use 4 times as much oil as we find. The tar-sands in Alberta, you say? Well, it almost takes as much energy to extract useable fuel from that source as it generates, at great environmental cost. The real question for us is whether we are scraping the bottom of the barrel.

There is the distinct possibility that Tony Blair and George W. Bush were told that "Oil is not well" (the White House is stacked with oilmen) and that Iraq should be taken because of the black gold there. After all, it has the second largest reserves in the world.

Of course, to say so openly would have caused panic in our planet which can only sail in a sea of oil. Just imagine the U.S. President broadcasting to the nation: "My Fellow Americans, we are almost out of oil. In order to safeguard our luxurious life we have to guarantee our supply. That's why we need Iraq. God Bless America."

No, he couldn't say that. So he first devised the WMD excuse: weapons of mass destruction sounded as good a reason as any. When that proved phoney, he changed it to 'love for humanity' and invaded Iraq strictly on moral grounds, because there was such a cruel man at the head of its regime, a man who had killed millions. Never mind that Saddam was a former ally or that the current chap in North Korea does have nuclear weapons and is starving millions to death. No, suddenly the Coalition had gotten religion: fight evil. Selectively.

If our world has one glaring weakness, it's its oil dependency. In August the geophysicist Kenneth Deffeyes told the New Scientist that he was '99 percent confident' that the date of maximum global production will be this year. If he is correct, then the supply of oil will decline from here on in. Others put it a few years later.

So, what is my prediction, what's in store for 2004? I remember from my university days that there is a law in economics, called the Law of Supply and Demand. If supply decreases and demand holds stable or increases, we will soon experience something that might not be all that pleasant for our living standard: the price of oil will go the way of the CN tower: sky high.

Not right away, of course. However, don't count on it to come down. Ever.

Of course, expensive oil is good for something: it might slow climate change. Right now, in the first few days of a new year I am practically sun-bathing rather than engage in my favorite sport: cross-country skiing.

The cruel reality is that rising fuel prices ruin a lot of people. Everything we use, every potato, every loaf of bread, every newspaper, has a large oil component. In the growing and consumption of farm products we use more energy calories than we generate in food calories. After the grain or produce leaves the farm, it's processed, packaged, distributed, often refrigerated, then we drive to the store from a far away suburb. So our energy dependence is everywhere, in every facet of life.

Are there alternatives? It's hard to come up with an even remotely plausible solution. I am discovering that we have a huge shadow: 'old sins have long shadows' says an ancient proverb. Our immense shadow is that the resources upon which our lives have been built, are running out. We don't talk about it, we don't want to talk about it because we cannot grasp the enormous implications. If we do not want to see the true significance of this condition, we are a people, a generation, in deep denial.

US elections

There is something in 2004 that I can predict with certainty: there will be an election in the USA. Already many of the major news magazines, *Newsweek, Time*, the *New Yorker*, the *Economist*, just to mention the ones I have seen, portray the leading candidates, one of which is, of course, the sitting president and the other Howard Dean. It's going to be the angriest contest I have witnessed in my 50 years of following the races for the American top political office.

In 1952 Eisenhower, a retired general, won the job. As president he said, " I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it." He never, in his two terms ever sported a uniform. Neither did that other war hero, John F. Kennedy. Compare that to you-know-who. Eisenhower also warned on April 16, 1953 that: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed." Wouldn't it be nice to hear this affirmed by his successor?

Here are some bizarre indications of what might happen to the current White House occupant, something I gleaned from Barron's in an Alan Abelsen column. Voters have never elected an incumbent president whose last name has only four letters, and without fail have refused to return the offspring of former presidents. Taft comes to mind, a one termer in 1909; Gerald Ford was another one who got the boot in 1974. The most recent one is a certain George Herbert Walker Bush, who also managed 4 years only, defeated by Bill Clinton. As far as sons or grandsons of former presidents: both John Quincy Adams and Benjamin Harrison had forefathers in that high Office. Both did not make it the second time around. The sitting president thus has two strikes against him: his name has four letter name, and a father as former president.

And then there is another, even more strange omen. All presidents elected in a year ending on a zero, have either died in office or were severely wounded. In 1860 was Lincoln elected and was assassinated in 1865. In 1880 James Garfield became the 20th president and died a year later. William McKinley was reelected in 1900 and was murdered a year later. Warren G. Harding, elected in 1920, went to his final destination in 1923, to be succeeded by Calvin Coolidge. Franklin D. Roosevelt saw his second term reaffirmed in 1940 and left us in 1945, which gave us Harry Truman. John F. Kennedy succeeded Eisenhower in the 1960 election and was shot in Dallas in November 1963. Ronald Reagan, elected in 1980, was severely wounded.

So, what does this mean for George W. Bush, who won by a narrow vote in December 2000?

Which brings me to Howard Dean. If I were an American citizen, would I vote for him? I am not sure. He strikes me as a bulldog type, who might not listen to sound advice and whose instinct is more to act than to deliberate. Wesley Clark might be my choice, just as Eisenhower would have been 50 years ago. Soldiers know the folly of war and have experienced that it seldom solves the root problem.

Coming back to predictions: looking back to Canada one year ago, who would have expected SARS and Mad Cow to negatively influence its economic well-being? In case you have forgotten what this acronym stands for: Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The 40 + deaths in Toronto, were all traced to one doctor who coughed in an elevator in a Hong Kong hotel. They will not be the last ones to die of a new illness, perhaps not SARS, but another brand new disease, say SAPS, Sudden Acute Paralyzing Syndrome or some other strange ailment.

Just like SARS, Mad Cow disease is back in the news. Given that humans are subject to strange illnesses, it is no wonder that cattle prove no exception. I feel sorry for the beef and dairy farmers: what they now get for their cows is pitiful. One of my friends, a dairy farmer, sold two cull cows. Normally he would receive about $500 per head. This time, after shipping and commission had been deducted, he received $2.00.

There could well come a time where he will be billed for disposing of them, because with the USA no longer being able to export, their home market will be flooded. It only takes a small surplus to make prices collapse.

That brings me to the USA. Today the world is fraught with uncertainties, so much that perhaps only the negative is accurate. Take the opinion of the men-in-the-know, America's top economists. When polled at the peak of the stock-market boom: "Is this a bubble?" "NO" they all said emphatically. In 2001 they ruled out an American recession and last year predicted that interest rates would not fall to 1%. In short, they provide an excellent contrarian indicator.

A few months ago when the Euro traded at $1.10, they were asked: "Will the dollar fall to $1.25 against the Euro at any time in the next 12 months?" With one exception they all shook their heads. Today the Euro is worth $1.26. They predict that house prices too will continue to climb in 2004. Better sell now if you want to benefit from top dollar and take advantage of cheap rent.

Bert Heilema lives in Tweed Ontario.

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The council and congregation of
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praise God for His faithfulness to our pastor,

Jerry J. Hoytema and his wife, Winnie,
as they officially begin their retirement after 40 years of ministry.
May the Lord continue to bless them as they begin this part of life's journey.
All are welcome on **Sunday, February 8, 2004** during the 10a.m. worship service,
as we will celebrate God's steadfast love. Reception to follow.

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Birthday

On Jan. 15, 2004, our father, grandfather and great-grandfather

Adrianus Maarten den Haan

celebrates his **100th Birthday.**

Psalm 90:17

Thank you God,
for giving so many years
of caring, spirit-filled living,
and thank you Dad, Opa & Groot Opa,
for your enduring love and support.

His children:
Gerrit & Susan den Haan
Sam & Bonnie den Haan
Ed & Willene den Haan
Marjorie Miedema
Martin & Berta den Haan
John & Bonnie den Haan

Happy Birthday Dad, Opa
from your children, 21 grandchildren
and 9 great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: c/o M. Miedema
17 George St
Alliston ON L9R 1M8

Schoonoord Jubilee

Schoonoord viert in het jaar 2004 het 150 jarig bestaan. Dat gaat het hele dorp vieren van zaterdag 10 juli t.m zaterdag 17 juli. Op donderdag 15 juli zal er een reünie plaatsvinden voor Schoonoorders en oud-Schoonoorders die ook in Canada of Amerika wonen.

Wat is er mooier om deze week naar Schoonoord te komen met vakantie en dan tevens de oude bekenden de hand te drukken, en het glas te heffen op ons mooi dorp.

Het programma is nog niet definitief maar een foto expositie mag natuurlijk niet ontbreken. Dus heeft U nog oude foto's zend die dan voorzien van naam en adres zodat ze weer bij de rechtmatige eigenaar terug bezorgd kunnen worden. Aansluitend is er een revue in de grote feesttent.

Aanmelden en foto opsturen kan naar en bij: aardemaa@uwnet.nl
Arie Aardema
Slenerweg 44
7848 AJ Schoonoord

Anniversaries

Aalten,1954 Feb. 3 Salford, 2004

HENK AND HERMINA DUNNEWOLD
(nee Jansen)

Thankful to our heavenly Father
who led our parents
through happy and difficult times,
we hope to celebrate their
50th Wedding Anniversary.

Bill († 1981)
Alyce, Greg, Adrienne, *Ottawa*
Rob, *Brantford*
Joanne, *Salford*

You are invited to an **Open House**
on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2004
from 2 - 4:30 at the CRC Church
in Ingersoll on King St. W.
Your presence is our gift.

Home address:
Henk & Hermina Dunnewold
RR1 (383952 Salford Rd)
Salford ON N0J 1W0

1954 January 29 2004

With thankfulness to the Lord

CONRAD AND ANN GUICHELAAR

with their children and grandchildren
hope to celebrate their
50th Wedding Anniversary.

Congratulations from your children:
John & Edith Guichelaar
Helen & Steve Hoekstra
George & Karla Guichelaar
Dave & Lynne Guichelaar
Sharon & Claudio Carniello
Roger & Jennifer Guichelaar
Susan Guichelaar

An **Open House**
will be held at Hope CRC
64 Buchanan Cr., Brantford
from 2 - 4 p.m. on January 31, 2004.
Best wishes only, please.

Home address: 107 Lynden Hill Cres
Brantford ON N3P 1R8

Obituary

Jan. 21, 1914 Dec. 18, 2003
St. Anna Par. Listowel, Ont.

JAN MEINEMA

at age 89 the Lord took home
our dear husband, father,
grand/great-grandfather

Beloved husband of
Jacoba Meinema (Krottje)
Loving father of: Elmer & Linda
Clarence & Teena
Greta Mc Mullen
John
Jake & Anne
Nel & Alfred Heim
Henry & Val
Peter & Jeanette
Robert & Deb
Ron & Janet
Paul & Myra
Connie
Lovingly remembered by
28 grand & 40 great-grandchildren.

Service was held
Monday, Dec. 22,03 at Bethel CRC,
Rev. Dr. Jack DeVries and
Pastor Ryan Braam officiating.

Correspondence: Elmer Meinema
424 Elma St E
Listowel ON N4W 2ES

Obituaries

On Sunday Dec. 21, 2003
our dear mother, grandmother,
great- & great-great-grandmother

PATRICIA BOOY

was taken to her heavenly home in
her 100th year.

Widow of Henry Booy since 1984.

She will be missed by her children:
Johannes Booy, *Delta,BC*
Albert Booy, *Woodstock,ON*
Marinus & Marie Booy
RR 2, St.Thomas,ON
Margaret & Charles van der Meulen
Cambridge,ON
Cynthia & Henry Smit, *St.Thomas,ON*
Maria Booy, *St.Catharines,ON*
Jane & Arie Van der Stoel,*Dunnville,ON*
Evert & Wanda Booy, *London,ON*
Henry & Anne Booy, *Wyoming,ON*
42 grandchildren
68 great-grandchildren and
one great-great-grandchild

She is also survived by:
sister Alie Dunning, *the Netherlands*
daughter-in-law Freddy Booy-Bos &
husband Ralph, son-in-law Jim Jobse
& wife Rose, and nieces & nephews

She was predeceased by:
Son Jan Booy in 1986
Daughter Hennie Jobse in 2000
Daughter-in-law Lammie Booy in 1987
2 grandchildren, Henry & Marcia Booy

One of her favorite scriptures was
Philipians 4:6,7

The funeral took place on Dec. 24, 2003.

Correspondence address:
Margaret van der Meulen
24 Clover Ave RR # 1
Cambridge ON N1R 5S2

Nov. 13, 1905 Dec. 20, 2003
Middelstum Grimsby
Groningen Ontario

The Lord took to His eternal home

ANJE DREISE (Van Dyken)

in her 99th year
from Shalom Manor in Grimsby.

"Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight."
(Ps 43:4)

Predeceased by her beloved husband
Johannes F. Dreise (Dec. 13, 1991)

Dear mother of:
Simon & Dina Dreise, *Chatham,ON*
Grace & Marten VanRooyen, *Forest,ON*
Maria & Dick DeJong, *Brighton, ON*
Albert & Alida Dreise, *Dundas, ON*

Beloved grandma of 27 grandchildren
68 great-grandchildren and
1 great-great-grandchild.

Predeceased by her granddaughter
Annette MacGregor.

The funeral took place Tuesday
December 23, 2003 at the First
Christian Reformed Church, Chatham,
Ont., Rev. Paul Stadt officiating.

"The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."
(Ps 121:8)

Correspondence: 27 Oak Ave
Dundas ON L9H 4Z1

Klundert Etobicoke
Sept. 9, 1931 Dec. 22, 2003

Our Lord took to himself his tired child

ELS (Anna Elsje) KUNTZ
nee den Engelse

wonderful wife, mother & grandmother

Hank Kuntz
Gerard & Jane – Caleb, Logan, Reuben
Neil
Lynn
Geoff

"Gloria In Excelsis Deo"

The interment took place on
December 27, 2003 after which there
was a service of remembrance in
Rehoboth Fellowship Christian
Reformed Church in Etobicoke.

Correspondence: 7 Deanlea Court
Etobicoke ON M9V 2R5

Amsterdam Toronto
February 20,1933 - December 27,2003

HUBERT BUDDING

Peacefully, after a courageous battle
with cancer, Hubert was taken home
by his Lord and Saviour,
on Saturday, December 27, 2003.

"What is your only comfort in life and death?
That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ."

1988 - 1998
Hubert Budding – Missionary
Presbyterian Church, Nepal

Beloved husband for 48 years of
Nan Budding (nee Hogeveen)
Dear father of:
Michael (Angela), *Stirling,ON*
John (Katherine), *Farmington Hills,MI*
Richard (Pauline), *New Hamburg,ON*
James (Cindy), *New Hamburg,ON*
Judy, *Magnetawan,ON*
and dearly loved by 11 grandchildren.

Dear brother of Geertje and Cornelis,
both of *the Netherlands*,
and Albert (Coby), *Montreal*

Dear brother-in law of:
Bert & Gerda Hogeveen, *Winchester,ON*
Cor & Jetty Hogeveen, *Ottawa*
Jane & John Vandesande, *Ottawa*
Henk & Helen Hogeveen, *Ottawa*
John & Lettie Hogeveen, *Ottawa*
Rita & Bert Hoolwerf, *Ottawa*
Henny & John Hoogeveen, *Ottawa*

A Service of Remembrance was held
at St. John's Presbyterian Church,
Toronto, on December 30, 2003.

Correspondence: Nan Budding
39 Parliament St Suite 1009
Toronto ON M5A 4R2

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Criminal Justice – Develop and teach in an interdisciplinary criminal justice program. Qualified applicants should have a background in criminal justice, criminology, sociology, or related field.

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Spanish –Teach elementary, intermediate, and upper level courses in Spanish language, literature, and culture.

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College, 498 4th Ave. NE **Facsimile: 712 722-4496**
Sioux Center IA 51250-1697 **E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu**

Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Victoria, BC

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DIRECTOR of OPERATIONS

Pacific Christian School (PCS) is a well-established, dynamic and thriving, interdenominational Christian school system of more than 900 students in Pre-School through Grade 12. PCS has a staff of more than 100 employees. The school draws its enrollment from 90 different churches representing 20 denominations in the greater Victoria area.

The **Director of Operations** reports to the Victoria Christian Education Society (VCES) Board and is part of a senior management team that includes the administrators of the secondary and elementary schools. The Director is responsible for analyzing and reporting on VCES's financial performance to the Board, and for leading the preparation of the annual budget. The Director has a key leadership role in the stewardship of the VCES financial resources, and in the achievement of compliance with Board policies. The Director is responsible for other non-academic administrative functions of the VCES.

Qualifications:

- College or university degree: emphasis in finance or business administration (or equivalent education and related experience).
- Extensive experience (minimum 5 years) in budgeting, policy analysis/development, and financial reporting/analysis.
- Business experience in a school environment is a definite asset.

A detailed job description and full qualifications are available upon request. Salary and benefits will be commensurate with appropriate training and relevant experience, and is based on the administrative salary grid. Suitably qualified, Christian applicants are invited to apply *by March 3, 2004*. Ideally, the successful applicant would commence duties by May 2004, to allow time for in-service training and orientation with the current **Director of Operations**. Please forward your letter of application, resume, references, and pastor's reference and/or Christian statement of faith to: Jack Taekema, Chair of the Director of Operations Search Committee, 671 Agnes Street, Victoria BC V8Z 2E7.

Direct enquires to:
Bill Helmus, Elementary Principal
Pacific Christian School
671 Agnes St. Victoria, BC V8Z 2E7
Phone: (250) 479-9365 Fax: (250) 479-3685
Email: bhelmus@pacificchristian.ca **Website: www.pacificchristian.ca**

THE KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Christian University Education

PRESIDENT

The King's University College, a Christian undergraduate university in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, has initiated a search for its third President. This person of faith, vision and commitment will lead the institution into the next exciting phase of its development. The Board of Governors, through its Presidential Search Committee, seeks candidates who have a bold, biblically-shaped vision for life, who demonstrate outstanding academic leadership with the ability to foster and build on existing traditions, and who show a proven capacity for passionately promoting the institution to a variety of audiences, enhancing its prominence, visibility and financial resources.

Distinguished by its commitment to university education and research as agents of positive social transformation, the University College is devoted to an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates faith, teaching, learning and scholarship. Faculty are highly qualified, dedicated Christians committed to academic excellence and bringing a distinctly Christian perspective into the classroom.

Founded in 1979, The King's University College currently enrols more than 650 students, employs 80 full-time faculty and staff, and has an annual operating budget of $8.8 million. A member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, King's offers fully accredited three- and four- year Bachelor degrees in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, commerce and theology, as well as a two-year Bachelor of Education after-degree. The urban campus, spanning eight hectares, is poised for a facility expansion that will accommodate up to 1000 students. For more details on The King's University College please visit www.kingsu.ca.

The Search Committee will begin consideration of candidates in March 2004, and is seeking a highly qualified individual who can take office in the summer of 2005. Requests for information, expressions of interest, nominations, or suggestions of suitable candidates are invited. Applicants may direct a curriculum vitae, a letter of introduction and the names of three references to:

Mr. John Kamphof, Chair, Search Committee and Chair, Board of Governors
c/o The King's University College,
9125 – 50 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6B 2H3
Fax: 780-465-3534; Email: john.kamphof@kingsu.ca

In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, this advertisement is first directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

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will need a Grade 6 teacher for a maternity leave effective April 1, 2004 through March 31, 2005. Continued employment as a teacher at JDCS after this leave is completed is a distinct possibility. A strength in teaching Science will be an asset. JDCS has a teaching staff of eleven and a total of 189 students. Qualified teachers may submit their letters of application or request more information contacting:

Mr. Garry Glasbergen, Principal
Jarvis District Christian School
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Fred Reitsma
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Advertising/Job Opportunities

PART-TIME MUSIC/WORSHIP COORDINATOR

Community Christian Reformed Church of **Kitchener**, Ontario is accepting applications for a Part-time Music Worship Coordinator. The position will begin immediately. Candidates should possess the following:

- passion and experience in worship ministry
- maturity in Christian character
- skills in organization and motivation of others
- ability to develop worship teams
- ability to use contemporary, choral and instrumental music as an integral part of Spiritual growth and service
- leadership and musical expertise to structure, coordinate, and implement services of corporate worship
- appropriate education and training

For a full description of the position contact: **COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH.**

Phone: (519) 743-9482 — *Fax:* (519) 743-4434 — *E-mail:* office@ccrc.on.ca
or visit our website at: www.ccrc.on.ca

Address letters of application and resume, by February 28, 2004, to:

The Search Team for Music/Worship Coordinator
Community Christian Reformed Church
1275 Bleams Rd Kitchener ON N2E 3X6
E-mail: office@ccrc.on.ca Fax: 519-743-4434 ~ Ph: 519-743-9482

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For more information, see our website (www.eacrc.org) or contact
James D. Bratt, Chair, EACRC Search Committee,
2321 Everest SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507
(jbratt@calvin.edu; 616/526-6198)

Director Of Music

(Part-time Position)

West End Christian Reformed Church (Edmonton), is seeking the professional services of a Director of Music. The Director will be responsible for and give direction to all components of the music ministry in the church. Primary tasks include: the direction of the adult choir, musical accompaniment on the church's 35-stop Létourneau pipe organ, and the encouragement of musical gifts in the congregation. Interested candidates may for-ward their resumes by Jan. 31/04 to:

West End Christian Reformed Church
10015 - 149 St., Edmonton, Alberta T5P 4Y4
or by e-mail to **admin@westendcrc.ca.**
For a detailed job description, please contact the Administrator at (780) 454-8151.

The three Christian Reformed Churches of **Sarnia**,Ontario are seeking a
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Art Capelle
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Ph: 519-337-4660 or email:
artc@rivernet.net

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- The **secondary position** will attract an individual with computer skills and a Science background.

Suitably qualified teachers should send applications or inquiries to:

William Van Dyke, Principal
Maranatha Christian Academy
939 Northwood St., Windsor ON N9E 2B4
Ph: 519-966-7424 Fax: 519-966-9519
Email: principal@maranathachristian.ca
Website: www.maranathachristian.ca

TABER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is inviting applications for a Junior High float teaching position beginning on April 19, 2004 and likely extended for 2004-2005 school year.

Taber Christian School is operated by the Society of Christian Education of Southern Alberta.

Committed Christian teachers are asked to send a resume and a Statement of Faith to:

Mrs.Marilyn Visser, Principal
4809 60 Avenue
Taber, Alberta T1G 1E9
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fax 403-223-4693
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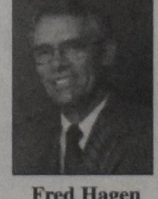

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

Jan 17 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m Wallaceburg Christian Reformed Church, 150 Bruinsma Ave, Wallaceburg. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357

April 10 **Annual Festival of Praise** by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of South Western Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Ticket: $13 (519)451-5484 or email: jettrickk@sympatico.ca For information: (519)637-4357.

Apr. 24 The MEN OF PRAISE (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis** Ont., at 7:30 pm. Freewill offering.

May 2 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St, **St. Thomas.** Freewill offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357

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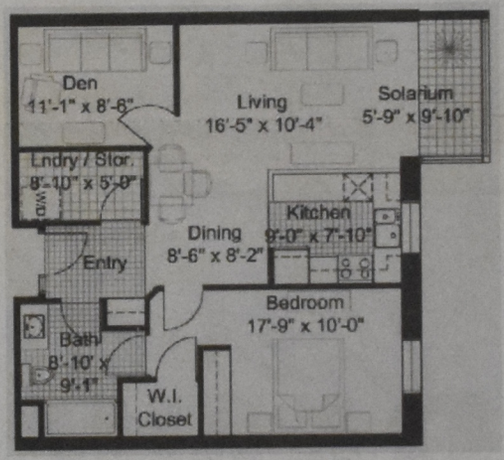

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Philippians 2:3-4

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First Christian Reformed Armed Forces chaplain ordained

On Saturday, November 22nd, 2003, history was made at the Kentville, N.S., Christian Reformed Church when David Sutherland was ordained into the ministry, making him the first regular, full time CRC chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces.

David was born and raised in Vancouver in an ecumenically oriented home. He joined the navy in 1986, reaching the rank of lieutenant before joining the military police, a classification he retained until his recent ordination into the ministry. It was while living in Ottawa, in 1997, that David and his wife were first introduced to the CRC through the East City Community CRC in Orleans/Ottawa. What drew them to the CRC was the sense of commitment and conviction they found there, a sense of community, and an openness to different approaches in the area of worship.

The following year David made application to the Canadian Armed Forces for ministry training, thereby giving heed to call he had felt for some time. Having a family to support, David felt that only through the Armed Forces would he be able to finance his studies for the ministry. However, there were two major obstacles to overcome in this connection. First, lacking a university undergraduate degree, would he be able to find a divinity or theological school willing to accept him? Secondly, being only a recent adherent of the CRC, would it be willing to support his endeavors since much of the ministerial training would have to take place within the context of a conventional church and denominational setting?

David found that the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax was willing to accept him into its Master of Divinity program, and David and his family were happy to come to Halifax because it is a naval city, because it would put them close to his wife Yvette's family, and because David found that the AST was willing to accept and support CRC ministerial objectives. Furthermore, the All Nations CRC in Halifax was willing to work with David and help him achieve his ministerial goals. David says that he and his wife saw God's hand in having overcome what they regarded as two major obstacles standing in the way of his ministry training.

With these obstacles out of the way, the Canadian Armed Forces also endorsed David's ministry training program, which had to be taken in Canada. And the Armed Forces' willingness to support a member of the CRC for its ministry training program was not to be taken for granted. For only recently have the Armed Forces accepted members of non-mainline denominations into its ministry training program, according to David.

David studied for his M. Div. degree at the AST between 1999 and 2002, graduating in May of the latter year. During that time David carried out the field-education component of his degree at All Nations CRC, and did so under its supervision. Furthermore, in March of 2001 Classis Eastern Canada granted David a licence to exhort. Special Armed Forces chaplaincy training took place in Halifax in the summer of 2001, and at Camp Borden, Ontario, in the fall of 2002.

To qualify for ordination in the CRC, David and his family moved to Kentville in the summer of 2002 to begin an internship at the Kentville CRC, and to study CRC doctrine and church history under the supervision of Rev. Norman Visser. In the fall of 2002, application was made for ordination under the provision of Article Seven of the CRC Church Order, this in view of David's lack of regular undergraduate training. This was followed in March of 2003 by a successful examination, under the provisions of Article Seven, by Classis Eastern Canada, making David a candidate eligible for call in the CRC. This call was extended to him by the Kentville CRC not long thereafter, and David successfully passed the examination for the ministry at a meeting of Classis Eastern Canada in November 2003. This meeting of Classis took place in Milford, N.S., one of the few times that Classsis Eastern Canada has met in the Maritimes. This set the stage for David's ordination on November 22, with which we began.

The ordination service was led by Rev. Paul Vanderkooy of Milford CRC supported by Rev. David Vroege of All Nations CRC in Halifax. The sermon was based on Romans 10: 8-15, and John 1: 6, with the theme of the sermon based on the second of these two passages: "There appeared a man named John [David], sent from God." One of the hymns sung, appropriately enough, was the naval hymn "Eternal Father, Strong to Save." Amongst those publicly congratulating David on his ordination were Colonel Padre Roland Murray (in uniform, as was David), Director of Pastoral Operations and Chancellery Services, who also spoke on behalf of the Armed Forces' Chaplain General, Elna Siebring of Halifax's All Nations' CRC, and Rev. Slauenwhite

of the Kentville Pentecostal Church. He related that when he arrived in Kentville recently to begin his ministry in this community, David was the first pastor to call and welcome him.

With David's ordination the CRC has gained a wonderful addition to its ranks in all respects, as well its first Armed Forces chaplain, as was observed earlier. Furthermore, the Kentville CRC is very fortunate, now that it is vacant, in that David will stay on for another year or two to complete his required practical training. David, Yvette, Marisa and Keith, we wish you many blessings while with us in Kentville, and when you take up your duties as Armed Forces chaplain.

Silent No More

Silent No More *Canadian founder Denise Mountenay*

Marlene Tersigni

Women who have quietly suffered the pain of abortion are breaking the silence to bring public awareness that abortion is harmful to women. Silent No More, a movement that began about a year ago in Washington D.C. for women who have had abortions, has now begun in Canada. Canadian founder Denise Mountenay of Edmonton, Alberta says Silent No More has post-abortive women reaching out to other women hurt by abortion. "We need to be on the frontlines to reach post-abortive women and let them know they are not alone, help is available."

In addition to providing assistance, Silent No More encourages women who regret their abortions to write out their testimonies as evidence that abortion harms women and kills children. Denise hopes to reach post-abortive women in every province across Canada "to write up affidavits on the negative impact abortion has had on their lives. These affidavits must be notarized and returned to us for possible use in litigation to prove this procedure is not a healthy choice for women." Already, several affidavits have been submitted for use in the Morgentaler vs New Brunswick case, in which abortionist Henry Morgentaler is demanding the province of New Brunswick pay for all abortions done in his Fredericton clinic.

Denise became involved in Silent No More when she was invited to attend an event in Dallas, Texas last June. Over 60 women gathered to share their stories and to hand in affidavits. Because Denise had an abortion in a Buffalo, NY clinic, her affidavit was included. She was then asked to head up Silent No more in Canada and just knew she had to do it.

With over 100,000 abortions in Canada every year, Denise knows there are many women who are suffering in silence. "I have been getting calls from women who are fighting depression, anxiety disorders, infertility, breast cancer, cervical cancer…we are just seeing a tiny tip of the iceberg. Below the surface are multitudes of damaged women."

Denise has personally experienced many of the symptoms of Post-Abortion Syndrome. She's written a book called "Forgiven of murder…A True Story" where she describes being raped at the tender age of 13. The trauma that followed led her to turn to drugs and alcohol, and at 16, she found herself pregnant. "My mother told me to come and have this 'operation' and forget about it. I was too young, so I thought this (abortion) must be okay." Then at the age of 26, she became pregnant again. At the urging of her mother and the birth father, she went to an abortion clinic. When she asked the doctor about fetal development, the doctor lied, telling her "it was just a clump of tissue." The abortion was done while she was wide-awake. "It was horrific, painful, and very traumatic. I got an infection. Now I have an incompetent cervix, scarred uterus, fertility problems, and an increased risk for breast cancer with lumps now removed.... I've fought depression, remorse, guilt, regrets and shame."

Denise feels it's imperative that women contemplating abortion be fully informed of all the risks involved, and that they be told about fetal development. Currently, there are no such requirements in Canada. Silent No More offers a way for women like Denise to warn other women of abortion's detrimental effects. "It lets us overcome something so evil with something good."

It may be painful for women who have had abortions to share their stories, but Denise believes the reward comes in knowing that it might prevent someone from choosing an abortion and save a child's life.

If you know of someone who is hurting after an abortion, who may have developed infertility, depression, breast cancer or other complications, Denise can be reached toll-free at 1-888-777-5503.